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ESSAY
ON
K
RELIGION
AND
MORALITY:
OR THE
SUM AND EVIDENCES
OF TRUE
RELIGION.

Quid verum atque decens, curo et rogo, et omnis in hoc sum,
_____quod

Aeque pauperibus prodest, locupletibus aeque;
Aeque neglectum pueris senibusque nocebit.

HOR. Ep. 1,

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TO THE
L E A R N E D
A N D C R I T I C A L
R E A D E R.

ON perusal of the following pages, you will discern that they are aimed at making the evidences and chief truths of religion more clear to the understandings, more engaging to the hearts, and more easily retained in the memories of youth. Had this design been undertaken by one whose habit and genius fitted him to add to rhyme the nobler poetical beauties, his work would have been far more extensively useful: though rhyme itself helps the memory, yet these are more powerful in moving the heart. If this imperfect essay shall give occasion to any so qualified to undertake the task, it will give the author the greatest satisfaction. In the meantime, it is hoped the benevolent reader will deem the attempt laudable, though the execution be weak, and very far from that perfection to be wished for. This the author being deeply sensible of, begs the reader's friendly assistance to render this essay less unworthy of attention. Which if he be pleased to give by writing, the favour shall be gratefully acknowledged, and used with docility and candor. Had it been possible to confine this essay to the readers for whom it was intended, this apology would have been spared.

THE AUTHOR.

AN
E S S A Y
ON
THE SUM
AND EVIDENCES
OF TRUE
RELIGION.

CHAP. I. *Of God and Nature.*

BOW, man on earth! to dust bow down thy head;
On truth from high in silent rev'rence feed.
Where-e're the sun doth shine, or winds do blow;
Where-e're there's ear to hear, or mind to know,
Suffer instruction in your hearts to sink:
On God, yourselves, and morals closely think,
Think and obey; for all the rules of life
Are plann'd for practice, not for show or strife.

NOTES in Dialogue between A. C. G. M. W.

A. COME now, if you please, we'll read and criticise a little on this essay.

C. Content. But it will be proper to read over the whole, and then a few lines at a time; and on that second reading, we shall make remarks, as justly as we can.

A. Your proposal is good. And you'll have patience and attention, while I proceed without interruption. [reads ch. i.—xix.] I return to the introduction.

Bow, man on earth! &c.

M. Indeed these lines sound pretty well: but the sense ought chiefly to be regarded, and I observe in them, 1. A repeated call to humility, which is necessary to docility. The self-conceited are too wise to be taught, too proud to learn. 2. A like reiterated call

to serious thinking with silence, or abstraction from the bustling of the world, so hurtful to the digestion of truth. 3. A description of truth, especially of divine and practical truth, as of high authority and the proper food of the soul. 4. An extensive call to receive instruction, more diffusely but elegantly enough expressed,

Where-e're the sun doth shine; &c.

5. The division of religious, moral, and civil subjects, according to the method of *the whole duty of man*, viz. God, ourselves, and our neighbours. 6. The end of all religious instruction and knowledge, well expressed by———think,

Think and obey; for all the rules of life
Are plann'd for practice, not for show, or strife.

God is the source of all. This unmade sun
 Through boundless space, and endless time doth run
 Unchang'd. All else that is, moves, acts, or grows
 He made, sustains, directs, o'er-rules, and knows
 With right past all our thoughts. His *pow'r* sublime,
 High *wisdom*, *goodness* pure unrivall'd shine.
 Whether these be the *three* in Christian writ
 Nam'd Sire of all, his Son, and Holy Sp'rit;
 Or this great Trine means somewhat more august,
 Quite 'bove our views, contend you never must:
 But meek adore and love, as lov'd you be
 By Him, who, us to gather, spreads in three.
 Behold! and feel divine love's strongest charm,
 While God spreads living wings mankind to warm;
 To warm with God-like love man sadly cold,
 And to expel fierce passions hot and bold.

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7. I think the first half of these verses are almost literally translated from the introduction to Oeconomy of Human Life.

G. This is truly critical: but if you look to Lam. ii. 10. Isai. xlvii. 1. and Prov. viii. 4. you'll perhaps find, that the Oeconomy has borrowed thence: as I have indeed further from Mat. xi. 15. Tit. ii. 12. and 1 Tim. i. 4.—6. and you may observe, that truth should have more authority in our way, than as fetched from Thibet or Patmos.

W. What you have now read is pretty poetical, the images being the most agreeable in visible nature: but it seems not so proper, in the entry of an essay, to launch into the depths of divine Ubiquity, Eternity, Decrees, Creation, Providence, and Trinity. And on the last, I'm afraid, you are not orthodox.

A. To begin with God is at least decent, and such unfathomable subjects certainly are not ill connected with our introductory call to humility, as nothing can be a stronger check on the pride of human intellect, than exercising it upon these essential, but inexplicable principles.

M. That is true. And I see you labour to give the doctrine of the Trinity a practical turn, in a way new to me. But I could wish to have, both the orthodoxy of your positions, and the grounds of your applications, made plainer.

G. As to positions on this article, your rhymester plainly declares against them. He is clearly of opinion, that positive or keen debates and contentions about confessed mysteries are unreasonable, and have been very hurtful to Christianity. Had Christians been modest in their speculations upon this mystery, and applied more to discern and pursue its practical kind intention, which is here attempted, it had been better for the world. And I suppose you will search long in creeds, systems, or sermons hitherto published, before you find any thing useful on this head.

C. But you don't declare whether you are Athanasian, Arian, or Sabellian.

A. I may say, I am none of these; but Christian. The first of these opinions, when stily explained, has, at least, the appearance of making three supreme beings. The Arian scheme does not mend the matter, but likewise makes three deities, though subor-

All true religions hold that God is one,
 Moses and Jesus; ev'n Abdallah's son
 Th' impostor bold, though cruel and impure,
 Enforc'd this truth idolatry to cure.

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God is the rock, his work is perfect nam'd,
 As all his ways are just, his nature fam'd
 For truth and purest right. On throne he fits
 Center of all; and every being fits
 With life and motion; to the wisest ends
 All nature and its course he kindly bends.
 On wings of wind he walks serene abroad:
 Through widest space all things obey his nod.

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dinate. I therefore, with modest assurance, leave the matter in suspense between the Sabellian and best Athanasian opinions, in a way most plainly consistent with the unity of God, which the strictest orthodoxy must allow.

W. I see the propriety of beginning at the being and excellencies of the adorable Creator and Saviour. Just views of his glorious and amiable character, are the foundation of all true religion and goodness. Attention to this is a chief preservative from superstition and vice. But contentions about the Trinity seem to have been sad occasions of Mohamedanism, Socinianism, and Deism.

G. These are our rational grounds; scriptural you may see Gen. i. Psal. xix. Jam. i. 17. Phil. ii. 5.—8.

M. Several questions occur to me here, as when you recite scriptures, why don't you tell to what part of your page each of them refers? Why don't you bring reasons to prove the unity of God, other than the authority of the Mosaic, Christian, and Mohamedan religions? And how came Mohamed, so bad a man, to assert the divine unity, when it was disagreeable to many he had to do with? I thought his plot had been, to allure followers by soothing their foibles, or suiting his doctrines to carnal inclinations,

G. As to your first question about quoting scripture without marks of reference, it is intended to keep our rhimes clearer, if they come to be printed: and chiefly, to lead readers to study and find out the connections themselves, which will be very improving. As to abstract reasonings for proving the being, unity, and other attributes of God; to dip into these, would be more tedious and prolix than seems proper for general use, and too difficult for us to manage poetically, though several things of that kind are intermixt prettily enough in Anti-Lucretius. And such as like to dive into that sort of arguments, may find great plenty in Dr. Cudworth's Intellectual System, Dr. Clarke's Demonstration of the Attributes and other sermons at Boyle's Lecture; in de Carte's Meditations, Messrs Fenelon and Leibnitz, and Woolaston's Rel. of Nature sect. V. But, in my apprehension, frequent views of the works of God with a good heart, will be more satisfactory to most people.

As to Mohamed's design, there seems to have been some enthusiasm mixt with his knavish ambition; or his plot might be, partly to allure, and partly to make a pretence to force men into his subjection. And the design of Providence by his conduct, seems plainly to have been, in some measure, to reform many barbarous people,

Grace, order, beauty from God's right hand do spring,
 Voices of wisdom through his works all sing;
 Roars in the thunder, chatters in the crane,
 Both laughs and weeps, and plays all tunes in man.
 In spring and summer, autumn and worst days,
 God sows, matures, and works good many ways.
 Most wise is he, not reas'ning never errs;
 He light as heaven emits, but none infers.
 O then, with veneration and esteem,
 This God adore, all-seeing but unseen!
 His works, our souls, nature and reason show
 That man should worship God, as well as know,

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and to chastise or punish bad Christians for their contentions and idolatries. See *Mod. Univ. Hist.* vol. I. pag. 12, 37, &c.

W. For Dr. Clarke and others whom you recommend, they are too abstract for me; I am satisfied with Ray's *Wisdom* &c. Derham's *Astro and Physico-theology*, and Abbè Pluche's *Nature Displayed*. These, with Abernethy's, Tillotson's, and Clarke's Sermons for practice, are sufficient. Even as to the unity, against which most may be said, from the evils and polytheisms in the world; I think the admirable suitedness and uniformity of kind design in the known creation, fully evinces both the unity and goodness of the maker, though it is doubtlessly proper, that such as have occasion to converse with subtle atheistical persons, be furnished with every rational weapon to defend this capital of religion.

G. Of scripture you may consult Deut. vi. 4. Mat. xix. 17. Mark xii. 32. Job xxxix.—xli, chapters.

W. You have put *nature* as well as God in the title of this chapter: but though you have said a good deal concerning the first, I mean God, you seem to neglect nature and leave her to shift for herself.

G. That objection, if serious, must arise from your not attending to, or understanding what is meant by nature: for in my view, nature as much as God has been sung

through all we have yet heard, and must appear so to every intelligent hearer or reader.

W. Perhaps I am not intelligent. But seriously I wish you would explain distinctly, what is meant by *nature*, as I perceive the word is ambiguous, and seems to occasion some darkness, or even wrong notions,

A. I believe it is so. And as to the various meanings of the word *nature*, you'll observe, 1. That it frequently signifies the constitution, or essence of any being, as when we speak of the nature of God, or the nature of man. 2. At other times, nature is opposed to, or at least distinguished from God; and then it means the whole creation, with the several constitutions, connections, and ordinary influences of created beings. I know not if we should distinguish from this, what the Platonic philosophers call plastic nature, as meaning an active but limited intelligence, which they suppose forms every creature. Dr. Cudworth and Mr. Ray go into this opinion; but their reasons seem to me inconclusive. The hon. Rob. Boyle, and Sir Isaac Newton more probably ascribe this forming power to the immediate hand of God according to general rules, which may account for monsters, or miscarriages in the natural as well as moral world. 3. Nature is sometimes set in opposition to art, or human improvements. 4. At other times, nature is meant of mat-

SAY God is one who made and governs all:
The sun not God, but his bright image call.
His light and heat revive each earthly spot;
Prize the good creature, but him worship not.
No more to faints or demons worship pay,
Nor to archangels, nor souls fled from clay;
More stupid still to worship stocks, or stones,
Statues, or pictures, reliques, or old bones.

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ter and involuntary impressions, in opposition to moral or free agents. 5. Nature or natural, is meant of the ordinary course of things, in opposition to miracles or extraordinary aids. 6. Among divines, nature and natural are often meant of moral corruption or depravity, in opposition to purity or rectitude: and contrarywise are often meant of virtue or moral goodness, as opposite to vice.

C. How came such contradictory meanings into our language? The first is absurd, since purity or true religion are agreeable to our rational constitution, but vice destructive.

G. I think so too. But verba valent usu, and there is little harm when they are distinctly understood, though it must be owned that wrong associations of ideas are very hurtful to morals and religion. And I conceive this disagreeable view of nature, has arisen from the depravity, which both scripture and experience shows to be in mankind very early, even as from their birth or nativity, from which the word nature is derived. And thence the departure from original or true nature, has, like a bastard, got the name of its father.

C. You call this chapter *precepts*; but I see little, or no difference betwixt it and the preceding: only a small part of this consists of precepts, and these rather in form of requests than commands. What may be the reason of this method?

G. It is this, Right conceptions of God,

you know, are the foundation of our paying proper regards to him; and therefore descriptions of his excellencies, in both these chapters, have considerable room. But as such conceptions are to be acquired by our voluntary application, they are part of the object or matter of divine law, and properly retain no small place here. All religion consists of two parts, the *Credenda et facienda*, or Faith and practice. In rational subjects (and none else are capable of religion) right conceptions or faith is to direct and influence other duties, and so are justly mixt in every wise institution. Again; as right conceptions of the Deity, are the produce of our rational application, they are here in a manner confounded with the *facienda* of natural religion, after the example of an apostle as to revealed. 1 John iii. 23.

C. That is to lay the foundation upon the superstructure, to prove natural religion by revealed.

A. Surely we may illustrate the one by the other, though natural religion be prior. But as to the form of requests, it is more affectionate, or natural: and so is often used in the sublimest antient poetry as in *Dent. v. 29.* and *xxxii. 29.* *Psal. lxxxi. 13.* Yet to conform to the title of this chapter, it begins in shape of a precept, *Say* instead of *If* in *Dionysius Cato's* verses, *Si Deus est animus.*

W. Can you not rather give a short explication, or arrangement of the subject on every page, as I attempted on the first.

A. We shall at least give a sample now

To one supreme, beneficent and wise,
 Belong all honour, adoration, praise.
 As he a Spirit is, his mental pow'r
 Demands the homage of our minds most pure.

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God by his hand stretch'd out the ample orbs,
 And with his finger course of stars describes :
 The fiercest comet he in strings doth lead,
 And orders ev'ry hair on ev'ry head.
 He bounds to ocean sets, and ev'ry rill
 Directs; and faith to stormy winds, Be still.
 He shakes the earth, and nations quake afraid :
 He light'ning darts, the wicked are dismay'd.

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and then, to excite the industry of readers. And here, in general, we have a prohibition of false worship, branched out into several particulars, as 1. We are forbid to worship the *sun*, which is the most alluring object in the visible creation. 2. We are forbid to worship invisible creatures; angels, or departed souls of men of whatever kind or degree. 3. We are forbid the lower and still grosser kinds of idolatry, which, to the disgrace of rationality and its author, has been, and still is so much practised in the world. 4. We have a repetition of the unity of the Godhead, with an assertion of his spirituality, and the pure worship which rational creatures ought to pay to him, and to him alone.

See Confucius, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, Antoninus and other ancients, in whom truth glimmers strongly amidst darkness.

G. These verses set forth the regards which we owe to God on account of his Almighty power, and represent to us some grand and striking instances of omnipotence.

C. They are right poetically express'd, I think a good deal in the manner or spirit of Pope, rising and falling in a beautiful variety, between greater and lesser objects and operations. I am particularly pleas'd with *leading comets in strings*, and *ordering the*

hairs on every head.

A. These sort of antitheses, are perhaps more proper in burlesque or satirical papers, than on grand and serious subjects; though I hope the above will not seem indecent, or below the matter.

M. Allow me to take a turn of the short lecturing office, or to observe the instances and improvements of divine power mentioned in your rhimes now read for the matter of this page, as

1. God's forming the unmeasurable orbits of the whole luminaries of heaven, and chalking out, as with his finger, the particular course of every star.

2. His guiding things apparently most irregular, immensely distant, or imperceptibly small, as comets and single hairs.

3. In his bounding the great ocean, and ordering the paths of every river, from the greatest to the least.

4. In disposing the air, and particularly allaying storms and tempests.

5. In ordering earthquakes below, and thunder or lightning around us, which are extremely awful and alarming.

6. In his making the whole world, or system of worlds, and destroying them at his pleasure, as by a blow of his arm.

7. The use of such displays of power, viz. to fill us with reverence toward God,

He by his word produces worlds all,
 Smites with his arm, and they to nothing fall.
 O reverence this great omnipotent !
 Nor, lest thou perish, dare his anger tempt :
 But in right conduct trust upon him still ;
 Who can and will thy truest good fulfill.

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The Lord is also gracious and kind ;
 Love is his heart, and purest light his mind.
 His creatures show his love ; their joys him praise :
 He cloaths, and feeds, and propagates each race.
 Justice with mercy wait before his throne ;
 Light, love and joy in him have ever shone.
 Lift we our eyes to heav'n, his glories bright ;
 His goodness through the earth ev'n shines all night.
 Glory and goodness make all nature glad :
 Truth as God's body is, our light his shade.

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with fear of his displeasure, and trust or confidence in him in the paths of our duty.

W. There seems to be another use of these displays of divine omnipotence, which you do not, at least directly, mention ; and that is to assure us, that he is perfectly wise, and just or righteous. This we may collect from the book of Job, where, to convince that suffering prince, that God had not, or would not treat him unjustly, the arguments are all drawn from instances of strength or wisdom, rather than of justice or moral character.

G. Nor is the reason of that difficult to be discovered. The evidences of divine power are more visible and striking ; and all injustice in creatures flows from a defect of power, to regulate other objects, and especially themselves. But he who is possess of irresistible power and perfect knowledge, cannot possibly be either forced, or seduced into iniquity or wrong. See Job as an ancient moralist only.

M. This subject of divine goodness and munificence, is certainly the most lovely and entertaining, that can enter the thoughts

of a rational being. But for the sake of order and distinctness, I imagine you should have, after power or strength, illustrated the knowledge or wisdom of God, before coming to treat of his moral character.

A. It would be so, if the plan had been to give a philosophic demonstration of the divine attributes ; but in a sort of poetical and popular description, there is not the same reason ; beside that here is mixt a short view of knowledge, amidst the instances of love. Light is mentioned, in the Platonic stile, as the mind of God, as well as love being his heart. And whatever proofs of divine goodness, may be drawn abstractedly from connections between Almighty power, perfect knowledge, and untainted goodness ; yet, I believe the best and most satisfactory evidences, arise from the contrivance, order, beauty and happiness discernible in his works.

W. It must be so to creatures of our present make. And therefore, I wish you had described more fully the works of God, as in Derham or Pluche ; or if that would be too prolix, might we not here make a little dia-

Let hills and vales to him rejoice and sing;
Fields, rivers, woods let with his praises ring!

But thee, O man! he hath distinguish'd high,
Endow'd with reason to maintain thy sway,
Fitted with language to seek social good,
With thoughts of God to be thy mental food.
His laws with nature he so kindly form'd,
Obeying, thou art blessed and adorn'd.
In imitation nat'ral of his love,
He and thy heart most happy friends shall prove.

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logue, at least as to objects on our earth, which most remarkably display the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty.

G. I shall begin it thus: if we look with attention to the grand exterior of the earth, we may discern, that however ingenious Dr. T. Burnet's Theory may be; however fruitful an intirely plain earth, without sea or hill, might be; however its present state may have the appearance of a ruin: yet it must appear a grand, a delightful, an useful ruin. The lofty mountains, the numberless hills, the endless variety of seas, rivers, fields, meadows are sources of wonder, of beauty, of trade, society and improvement to mankind, in my view, preferable to all the uniformity of Burnet's Antediluvian earth.

M. Another evidence of divine munificence which I would notice is, the vast numbers and variety of vegetables, as grasses, flowers, corns, trees and fruits. I remember particularly an account of the fertility of an elm, whose seed in a century would raise so many millions of trees as might cover the whole earth.

A. That is in your favourite Abbé Pluche's Spectacle de la Nature. And the observation which his *priour* makes upon that fertility is very strong, and concludes to this purpose, 'That it was the intention of the Deity, to overwhelm us with this species of infinity, that unfolds itself in all his works, even the minutest, to keep our understandings in subjection to that infi-

nity which shines in his essence, his attributes and operations.'

W. I see here, that, after a short description of the natural calls to devotion in the visible heavens and earth, you come to the human frame, which is doubtless the nearest, and to us, most convincing proof of the divine excellencies, and of our duty toward him. You'll please to explain it more simply or connectedly.

A. That I shall do in the shortest systematic way that I can; observing first, that by our reason we are not only rendered capable to rule and improve inferior beings around us; but to form proper ideas of the several perfections of the most High. These ideas of God we form, by ascribing to him every property which we feel, and conceive to be good in ourselves; and abstracting whatever in us implies any imperfection; and by adding to this purified idea the incommunicable attributes of uncreated, unchangeable and infinite. Besides existence and spirituality, the radical perfections which reason finds in human nature, are, *power*, or strength to produce effects or changes; *knowledge*, or capacity to discern and judge of things; and *goodness*, or inclination to promote right and happiness.

These three perfections seem to us, not only distinct, but, in limited natures very much separable; though, in an unlimited spirit, we must conceive a necessary connection betwixt each of them. Thus, infinite

O! praise his goodness then with grateful songs;
 His love oft meditate amidst all throngs!
 Let heart, and lips, and thy whole life him praise;
 Whose works and laws promote thy good always!
 His works, our souls, instinct and reason show,
 That man should honour God as well as know.

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God's providence o'er all his works doth reach,
 Rules and directs with wisdom past our search.
 He various laws to beings all hath giv'n,
 And most by nature keep the will of heav'n.
 In his bright mind he knowledge all involves;
 All future events with great ease he solves.
 To his foreknowledge nothing falls by lot;
 Under his providence blind chance is not.

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mental power must imply perfect knowledge; and perfect knowledge must lead to chuse what is best, namely, true goodness; while Almighty power must render goodness perfectly effectual and steady.

C. You seem to be too metaphysical. And we wish to see moral excellencies, both with regard to God and man, more clearly delineated, as we are sensible of the great importance of having proper views or tenets on these subjects.

G. You'll observe further then, that moral rectitude, holiness, and goodness in its full extent do all mean the same thing. This rectitude or goodness joined with knowledge, constitutes wisdom; the same goodness regarding the conduct of rational creatures, is called *justice*; respecting the miserable, it is named *mercy*; and regarding truth, it is faithfulness or *veracity*. Of these justice is most apt to be misunderstood, or conceived as something opposite to goodness.—Rendering his own to every one, is the idea of commutative justice among men, but is not so proper to the supreme Ruler. With him *justice* is nothing else but goodness to reward or punish creatures according to their moral actions. To reward is easily reduced to goodness: but even punishments with a

wise and good sovereign, can have no other view than to restrain evil, and promote good on the whole. See Prof. Hutcheson's works passim, Abp. of Cambray on the Existence of God, More's Antidote against Atheism, and Abernethy.

M. I see you come, from the power and goodness of God, to descant on his providence; without insisting on the divine knowledge by itself, but jumbling it both with goodness and providence. I can account for this from the shortness of your plan; but I suppose you have forgot the great difficulty, how particular providence is consistent with free-will, or accountableness in man?

A. For that great difficulty, as you justly call it, we may have a proper place elsewhere. Now I shall only say, that I am far from deciding in that question. On the principles both of reason and revelation, we believe that God knows and most wisely over-rules all things: that we are so far free as to be justly accountable, I am convinced by my own feeling, which I think cannot be deceitful. But how to reconcile these, or to explain how the Deity sees or decrees all things, or wherein human liberty precisely consists; they seem to me the wisest men,

His thoughts are wonderful, his councils high;
 Into the way he knows thou canst not pry.
 Honour his wisdom highly, as most just;
 To him apply, and humbly in him trust.

As in the present, so in future state
 All God's perfections reign, but no blind fate.
 With equal justice he will judge the earth,
 Without respect to station or to birth.

Hath he made laws in mercy and goodness?
 Shall he not punish such as them transgress?
 Think not, fond man! because that God delays
 To punish, that he winks, or will always.

He sees and minds the secrets of all hearts,
 And will reward both great and little parts.
 Whene'er the soul shakes off the cumbrous load
 Of mortal clay, she must account to God;

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who do not pretend to determine. Thus does bishop Burnet on the XVII. of the XXXIX. Articles. And whoever will unbiassedly read his arguments on both sides, or Dr. Clarke's and Leibnitz's Letters, may see how they ballance and darken one another, rather than strike out any satisfying light.

W. I shall never puzzle myself with such intricacies; but obey your two last verses.

A. Indeed such studies serve no good end, if it be not to humble our pride, or to accustom us to thinking; which last is much better accomplished by mathematics, where the mind is encouraged to proceed, by its finding truth clearly though laboriously.

C. If I was for niceties, I would rather pry into the wonders of Providence, as in the operations and vast prolificness of silkworms and bees, which are so useful to mankind: and of most insects on land and water, so necessary for supporting birds and fishes, which are so pleasant, necessary or useful to us.

G. On the other hand, I would observe,

how kindly Providence has, both rendered the great fierce animals much less prolific, or made others to destroy them; or has disposed them to affect a more solitary life: whereas if lions, eagles, or aligators were as fruitful as hens, bees, or muscles; or fewer as they are, if they flocked or herded together like sheep, geese, or herrings, they would be armies too formidable for men in many countries. Numberless instances of these kinds, call us not only to admiring thoughts; but, contrary to abstract speculations, excite to active industry and humble praise. Beside Nature Displayed, you may consult Ulloa's Travels, Sherlock on Providence, Job 35.—41. chapters, and Psalms 107. and 145. throughout.

W. In the lines now read, I see you pass on, from divine Providence in this world, to the exercise of his justice in a future state. I have no objection to the method; but am not so clear, how reason alone, or natural religion, which is still the subject in hand, can show that men must account to God for their actions at death, more than at any other time. And as little

Whose sentence just gives retribution sure,
According to the works of lewd or pure.

Then shall the wicked tremble all in fears;
But good rejoice, when the great judge appears,

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does nature seem to afford any proof of the resurrection, or of a general judgment.

A. On reviewing the words above rehearsed, you will find that I do not speak of a resurrection of the body. This seems to be the discovery of revelation alone; though it is probable, that by tradition near as old as nature, a resurrection at the end of this world, has been strongly believed. See Job as an old history, xix 25.—27. But waving this, nature certainly teaches the immortality of the soul, or a future state; and with equal certainty teaches a retribution, or rewards and punishments in that state. The natural hopes and inward joys of goodness here, as well as the dread and remorse which haunts great vices upon earth, are samples of it; and the unchangeable justice and other perfections of God, are not obscure evidences of such retributions.

M. That seems pretty clear, from what I have read of Plato, Tully, Seneca, Plutarch and other ancient Pagan writers, who had no other source of their notions, but reason or very dark traditions. Even the Elysian fields and Tartarus of the poets, yield us no contemptible evidence on this point.

G. No doubt. But to anatomize this page, you may observe,

1. That it is asserted, how a wise-just God, and not fate, governs both worlds.

2. That he will act and judge impartially, without being swayed by foreign circumstances.

3. We have an argument that he will punish the disobedient, taken from the goodness of his laws, which wisdom cannot suffer to be trampled on.

4. A call to men, not to harden them-

selves because judgment is not speedily executed.

5. An argument for the same, taken from God's omniscience and universal justice.

6. The most important time when our accounts must be given, namely, at death, though it should be delayed till then. And,

7. We have the justice of the divine sentence and execution thereof, exactly suited to the characters of persons, whether good or bad. I have done my part.

A. I own your lecturing is practical, though it seems more heavy than regular. But I think it is in the spirit of Sherlock on Judgment, and on a future State.

M. This is what we may call the conclusion of your practical natural religion. I think it is mostly translated from the fore-said Oeconomy, and that the two first lines, as also the last of this page, still have respect to a visible general judgment, which cannot well be named an article of natural religion. However, a good part of it is true morality, but not so pertinent to religion.

A. Nay, in a just view of the matter, religion and morality will not be found so different, or opposite as you imagine. Religion indeed in its most confined signification, means our duty or obligations to God only; in which sense it is opposed to morals, or our duty to ourselves and other men: but very often both religion and morality are taken in so extensive a meaning, as to comprehend our whole duty, each of them both to God and man, but respecting the different sources from which our obligations arise. All duty is called religion, because we are bound to it by the high regards which we owe to God; and the same mat-

Oh! fear the Lord then all thy living days;
 Walk in the paths which he before thee lays;
 Let prudence thee advise, let temp'rance rein,
 Let justice guide thy hands, thy heart love warm:
 Let truth to men, and gratitude to heav'n
 Inspire thy soul with courage firmly ev'n,
 Hear thou God's gracious voice, and it obey;
 So shall thy soul in peace for ever stay:
 These shall give comfort in thy present state
 And to blest mansions high shall bring thee late.

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C H A P. III. *Natural Religion its Defects.*

THUS far may reason when improv'd go,
 Not spoil'd by custom bad, good reason's foe.
 Yet great defects this light cannot supply;
 How sinful creatures may to God apply?

ter is named morality, as we are bound to it by the rational, or self-moving faculties of our own minds and souls. In the first of these senses is religion meant, as distinguished from morality in the general title of this essay. And nearly in the same sense, it is used in this chapter, though it still has a chief respect to the duties we owe immediately to God. Only the cardinal virtues are brought in as necessary means and ingredients of piety, thus

Let prudence thee advise, let temp'rance rein, &c.

W. I thought the four cardinal virtues had been prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude; but you make seven of them without mentioning patience. And I am persuaded, that even from ancient heathen writers, you might have collected a much fuller system of natural religion, than is given in this chapter.

G. Your persuasion, I think, is wrong, as to religion strictly so called. Indeed, as to morals, if one will be at the pains to take Homer, Hesiod and Theognis, Confucius

and Pythagoras's Golden verses, Plato, Aristotle and Plutarch, Horace, Virgil and Lucan, Aesop, Cicero and Seneca, Antoninus and Epictetus with their several Pagan commentators; and collect all the best things out of them (and he would leave a wondrous heap of trash behind) he might raise a much larger structure of morality, than Valerius Maximus has done of sayings and facts. But if I mention seven virtues, while the ancients name but four cardinal ones, it looks as if this was pretty full, however short. And if patience be not included in prudence or fortitude, we may say as the Greeks do of justice, which I translate

In righteousness all virtue is contain'd.

W. I suppose you now give so large measure for a page, because your poetry is coarse. But I wish you would here explain reason and custom, as you did before on nature and religion.

A. As to your supposition, all critics allow, that both in rhetoric and poetry, a

And how imbody'd souls in outward forms
May pay fit homage, which bare spirit scorns?

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All nations and most facts do men reproach
As guilty, and unfit heav'n to approach,
Without atonement and a middle friend,
As Ramsay shows at Cyrus' travel's end.

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'Tis yet more plain, that outward worship ought
Be paid by such as bodies have and thought:

But where to find a mediator fit,

Or outward rites which wise God will admit,
Surpasses human ken. Hence worthless priests,
So various through the earth; and blood of beasts,
Of birds and men, with demons heroes old,
And numberless vile rites not to be told.

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How such for intercessors, and for means
To honour God, should chosen be, it seems

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expressions should be suited to the matter. If so, when treating of natural religion's defects, there ought to be some harshness and chasms in the words, the better to express the absurdities, and want of connection in the subject. As to your wish, *Reason* has at least two faces, one very broad, meaning the whole rational faculty: another very narrow, respecting a particular argument. *Custom* too, either looks abroad to see what others do, and is named *fashion*; or acts frequently at home, and is called *habit*. Reason and custom are both good and useful when united. Then the one directs, and the other enforces and makes the matter easy. But when they are separated, or custom leads her natural conductor, they fortify one another in folly and mischief. See Spect. N^o 64. and Young's Satires. Yea, superstitious custom has even caused reason to be thought bad, and the impartial use of it sinful.

M. I see that in the above lines, you allow that reason may go a good length in religion and morality; but that even when well cultivated, it cannot reach two important points, namely, how sinners guilty as

we now are, can apply to, or obtain reconciliation with God? And secondly, how creatures who have bodies as well as souls shall fix on such rites of worship, as naked spirits need not, but are proper in our imbody'd state? From groping after these points, you alledge, have flowed so many Demoniack, Heroic, and priestly mediators, with so many kinds of worthless sacrifices and ugly rites.

A. You apprehend the matter sufficiently.

C. But I am not so sure of the solidity of the argument. May not reason discover, that reformation and goodness are sufficient to obtain access or favour with a good being? and might not reason fix a few decent rites, or none at all?

G. Possibly, if reason was untainted by sense and fancy, it might do so: but not in our present state.

M. You seem to think it unaccountable, that mankind should so soon turn from just notions of God and his worship, and fall into idolatry and superstition; though the ignorance how to have access to God, or to

Most strange to think: but so it was in fact,
That sons of men most early left the tract
Of pure devotion, and beholding stars
Misjudg'd their influence, and fell to wars
And violence, enforc'd by magic charms;
With persecuting rage, and false alarms.

25

China and Egypt, early learned, show
How cross to reason witchery can go.
See! these and Chaldees sink with open eyes
In magic bogs, and Providence despise.
Nor did the Persians impious conduct shun,
When they stopt short, and worshipped the sun.

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And by degrees stooping still worse, these lands
Gilt idols, brutes, dead figures, fire that stands

pay him proper outward worship, before asserted, appear almost unavoidable inducements to such irregularities. Abbè Pluche's Account of the rise of Idolatry seems more simple and probable. He deduces it from the Egyptian hieroglyphics, or signs of the increase of the Nile, represented by an Ibis, Hawk, or other emblem, which in course of time, the people forgetting the original intention, looked upon as the causes of felicity, and thereby were led to worship them as gods.

A. No doubt, Pluche's grounds of idolatry might add greatly to the corruptions of religion in Egypt, and might even spread thence through other countries round; but it is more probable, that the worship of the sun, and perhaps of deceased great men or friends, took place before these Egyptian symbols were either much used or abused.

M. When do you think idolatry began? Was it before the deluge or not?

G. These questions are too large and uncertain to be treated here. The learned and curious will find much on these points, in Selden de Dis Syris, Vossius de Idololatria, Stillingfleet's Origines Sacrae, Bishop of London on Idolatry, and Univ. History on Egypt, Babylon, &c.

W. The last is sufficient for my curiosity, both in the ancient and especially the modern part, where well attested relations are to be found, of such corruptions of religion in China, India and Africa, as these former learned gentlemen could not so well know.

But as to your three lines after—*beholding stars*, I think they are not clear or well connected; and after that, by joining China and Egypt, you would seem to alledge, that idolatry prevailed first in China; whereas, by Mod. Universal History, vol. viii. page 340. &c. it appears, that the religion of that country was pretty pure till some years after Christ.

A. China and Egypt are only joined in ancient learning, however late either of them might be, in astrological or other absurdities. But the imagination of divinity in the stars, was certainly very early in many places; and having no ground but fancy and bigotry, that superstition must have been supported by like arts, or by a persecuting spirit with violence or wars. For this reason we say so much against astrology and magic.

W. Probably indeed, astrology or believing in the stars as deities, was the first

On hearths ador'd, thereby to sink the soul,
In passions dire which worship should controul.

35

Nor did the Grecian wit, or Roman art
Reform these blots, or object true assert.
They rather added still, and turn'd to worse
Egypt's fond emblems, trusting cruel Mars;
With hundreds more, weak or destructive gods,
Men to debase, and overwhelm with loads
Of dismal superstition, which the mind
Subjects to passions harsh, and makes more blind.

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defection from natural religion, since the sun and stars are so resplendent, as almost to force the chief attention of human eyes; so cheering as to awaken gratitude in our hearts; but so wonderful in their motions and appearances, as to puzzle them who had not clear astronomical knowledge. And no wonder that, through such attention, gratitude and amaze, men were soon led to worship these objects, or apply to them by charms, somewhat like their apparent motions, but dark and unsatisfying like the fancies and suppositions of the votaries.

A. You endeavour, I perceive, to connect things better than in my rhimes; but it may be more useful to observe the several gradations of abuse in natural religion.

M. These gradations I shall try to delineate, thus, The 1. and perhaps least vicious abuse was, to stop at the sun and worship him, as the brightest visible image of the true and invisible Deity.

2. In joining polytheism with idolatry; to worship the host of heaven, or a multitude of stars together with the sun or moon.

3. In using charms to procure the favourable influence of the stars, as well as paying them more direct adoration.

4. Descending to the worship of culinary fire, and, I know not by what terrible stride, to brute animals and figures of dead men.

5. The vast spread of these abuses amidst the learning of Chaldea and Egypt,

and progress of science in Greece and Rome.

G. That arrangement relates only to the external worship of false deities: but you have not taken notice of the progress of superstition in the mind, with its bad effects on the heart and conduct of idolaters.

C. These belong to the next page. In the mean while, I would enquire how far the ancient idolaters considered their images, or other visible objects, as representations of an invisible Deity; and how far they, or the papists can be excused of impiety, since it is possible they did, or may intend to pay their adoration, not to the creature or image, but to the supreme and true God through these.

A. It seems scarce possible, that thinking and philosophical persons should not entertain such views and intentions; but the multitude and gross of mankind under such false religions, cannot long keep their views above the visible object. And the vast blinding influence which idolatry, and worldly interest have upon the human mind, even of such as are eminently cultivated, is astonishing. The instances I have particularly in view, are the two learned and ingenious French Abbès Rollin and Banier, who, though they strongly condemn the idolatry of old Greece and Rome, do not see it in their own church.

W. I suppose rather they saw, but durst not own it. A melancholy situation!

So worshippers of fire become more fierce;
 Of warriors, crueller; of beasts, leave scarce
 The face of men: logs worship'd must encrease
 Stupidity supreme. Thus men in Perse,
 Egypt and Syria, and old Terah's seat
 Serv'd objects low, religion to defeat.

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And as their objects gross, their rites were black:
 Moloch and Syrian goddess in their track
 Left blood and ravish'd maids; Jove parricide;
 Mercury thefts; Bacchus debauch: beside
 Venus and Priaps west, and Lingams east,
 Which man with modest sex converts to beast
 Behind religion's screen. These to describe
 Would shock the sober, and make fools deride.

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M. You had before hinted at the bad effects of false religion, or superstitious worship. As this is of importance, it will be proper to illustrate it, more fully and methodically than in your rhimes.

A. That I shall the more willingly attempt, as I believe, that regular and pure worship, is chiefly intended and required by our Maker; because it naturally has the most salutary, and happy effects upon our minds and hearts. I mean, when the object of our adoration is worthy; when our notions of that object are suitable, and our addresses serious. We will by the very exercise of such worship, be assimilated gradually to the adored excellence, and rub off every disagreeable quality. Irregular passions will be suppressed, the heart purified, and the mind opened. And contrariwise, want of excellence in the object of our worship, must deprive us of these good effects; and allow the corrupting influence of worldly passions, depraved taste, and evil customs to have their full power, in debasing and tainting us more and more. And which is still worse, if the object really, or in our notion of his character, be vicious, our adoration of such an object will have a strong positive influence to render the worshipper bad and worse. Lucretius the poet, seems half to have seen the truth, when he extolls De-

mocritus or Epicurus his *Gravus Homo*, for attempting to deliver men oppressed

——— *Gravi sub religione.*

If he had taught true religion, he had merited all that praise; as even but to free men from gross superstition is beneficial.

W. You seem to reckon wrong worship worse than none, or superstition worse than atheism itself.

G. That must be, or not be, according to the kinds and degrees of the superstition, or atheistical principles. Every character here is mixt; and when the object of one's worship has more good than ill in it, the worship seems better than none; but when ill or viciousness preponderates in the object, or in one's idea thereof, it is worse than none.

C. I think the largest part of this chapter, should rather be called abuses than defects of natural religion: and if abuses are a good objection, does not the same lie against revelation, which has also been much abused?

A. The last of these difficulties will be more fully considered afterwards. And tho' what you would call abuses of natural religion, undoubtedly deserve that name; yet they are such abuses as flow from attempts to supply real defects, which is not the case with the Christian revelation.

BUT in such horrid rites all nations stray'd;
Most wealthy and polite most vice betray'd,
While God, of love and mercy, call'd his friend
Fam'd Abram forth, true worship to defend:
And his descendants form'd into a state,
By miracles and laws divinely great!
So grand and plainly true, attentive minds
In strong conviction forcing witness binds.

5

Think now! you see an host of myriads ten
Sixfold, from Egypt freed by first-born slain;
Beasts, fields, and every element o'erthrown,
And wondrous magic arts delusive shown.

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C. To clear the ground as we go along, if you please, let us here discuss what you just now promised should be considered afterwards, that is, before we enter upon the subject of this chapter, let us enquire more fully as to the intention of the preceeding. Thus, for what good purpose was it, to describe the defects or abuses of natural religion? Is it for shewing that to be false, that revealed religion may be introduced or built upon its ruins? or was it to shew the first to be evil, the more to recommend the other? In any of these views, I'm afraid, revelation, even the Christian revelation, may suffer; since we know it has been abused into numberless superstitions, contentions, and even idolatries little better than Pagan.

A. Your enquiries are important. Nor is the solution of them difficult. And first, the preceeding chapter was by no means calculated to show natural religion to be false. The second chapter, as long as any one in this essay, was designed to illustrate the truth, as well as chief parts of natural religion. All intelligent Christians own, that nature's law is fundamental to revelation, without which the latter can neither be introduced, nor stand on a firm bottom. Nor can abuses of any religion, prove that the religion itself is bad or false. Even intrinsic defects will not prove so much. The defects of natural, and of the Israelitish religion too, are indeed grounds to make men

expect a more perfect one from a good and merciful God; as the abuses of nature's light, should both recommend the purity, and condemn similar abuses of Christianity.

M. I think the divine goodness is very remarkable in this matter, if it be true which Stackhouse alledges, viz. That idolatry began about the time of Abram's birth and in that neighbourhood; so that God, by raising this renowned patriarch, provided a remedy almost as soon as the disease appeared. I wish you had expressed so lovely a part of divine conduct more plainly in your verses.

A. That is really express'd, though perhaps not very plainly, in the word *while*, which otherwise would have been *till*. *While God*, to attentive readers will reach from the call of Abraham, through the law of Moses, and times of the gospel even to this day; where vice prevails amidst opulence and improvements in policy, arts and sciences.

W. That is a long while indeed! and may let us see how needful it is, to ponder well every word which may have so extensive a signification. Nor are your last four lines free of obscurity.

G. Nay, I imagine that whoever will compare these lines with Exod. vii — xii. chapters, will sufficiently understand them. Or see Bayle's and Calmet's dictionaries on Abraham and Moses.

C

See! this fame host through bottom dry, on sand
 March soft and quick, with sea on every hand
 Wall'd up, one night illumin'd; when the waves
 Turn'd back become of Pharaoh's war the graves.

15

Then, think yourself plac'd high in the mid-air
 Above the desert Arabie, or where
 Mount Sinai rears its head; thence to behold
 Bread rain'd from heav'n above, and water cold
 Made gush from rocks erst dry, long to sustain
 That wand'ring multitude. But still more plain,
 Behold! and hear! smoke, fire, and thund'ring sound
 Articulate pronouncing laws, while round,
 The trembling host with forc'd attention hear,
 That voice which angels listen to with fear;
 More loud than modern war at sea or fort,
 Declaring precepts pure, to this import:

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M. When you are entering upon the enforcement of the Mosaic law by miracles, I think it would not be amiss to consider the nature of a *miracle* in general; how to distinguish true from false miracles; and how and why, the magicians of Egypt did or were permitted to work such things as are recorded of them?

A. The first of these questions belongs to a following part, chap. viii. page 37. As to the rest you will find a pretty full account in Stackhouse's history of the Bible, which you referred to already. It may be sufficient here only to say, that the providential end of these magicians being permitted to perform such wonders, seems to have been to demonstrate, not only the weakness of magic in general, when attempting to rival divine power; but particularly, to give the strongest means of conviction to Pharaoh, who might have supposed his magicians equal to Moses or his God, if he had not seen them try their uttermost, and be baffled.

C. That belongs rather to the preceding page. But in this we may observe four most remarkable and lasting miracles: The passage of the Red-sea, and giving of the

law, were most grand and astonishing: but the manna and water from the rock were so lasting, that tho' deception seems impossible in the first two, the evidence is rather stronger in the latter. These miracles singly, and much more jointly and with many others, are so striking and perswasive, that another sort of miracle seems to arise in the incredulity of the Israelites, or their neighbours who had good information of these facts; or even of modern great and learned men, who have written against these histories, with more than insinuations against Christianity itself.

G. These things may doubtless seem strange; but can as well be accounted for, as the absurdities in the worship or religion of Egypt, Canaan, Greece, or Rome of old, or of many nations at this day. The strength of fancy, passions and custom in numberless other cases, are equally surprising as in these instances of incredulity. Through such prejudices even the great minds of Lord Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke disliked the Jewish history and Christian scheme, as well as Collins and Tindall. But for this page, see Exod. xiv. and xv. chapters with Numb. xi. and xx. and Deut. viii.

I am th' Eternal and thy God, who faves
Thee from destruction, and the land of slaves,

30

I. Adore no god but me, most wise and kind.

II. Abhor the worship of all idols blind,
Lest holy God you punish, and your seed.

III. Nor use his name but rev'rent and in need.

IV. The seventh-day sabbath mind, and it observe,
In holy rest your Lord and Maker serve.

35

V. Honour your parents, that you may live long.

VI. Kill not, nor hurt yourself or others, wrong.

VII. Cleave to one mate, and shun all acts unchast.

VIII. By sloth, fraud, force, no man's possession blast.

40

IX. Bear witness true, and defamation shun.

X. Nor in your heart let lust or av'rice run.

W. This paraphrase of the ten commandments is good: yet it scarce comes up to your sounding introduction in the last page; nor does it hit the full meaning of the original statutes, particularly as to the 2d and 4th. I see also that you make 12 lines of the whole, likely for reasons too fanciful.

A. The shortness is agreeable to the general plan of this essay. And if the reasons to enforce the 2d, 4th, and 10th commands be too briefly mentioned, the 6th, 7th, and 8th are more fully express'd than in the original. As to the number of 12 lines being fanciful, in corresponding with the 12 sons and tribes of Israel, 12 gems in the oracular breast-plate, and the twelve apostles of the Lamb; such coincidences may assist the attention and memory, nor are they unsuitable to the vein of a rhymester.

M. Well. But for what reason do you think, all these precepts (except the 5th) are of a negative or prohibiting form; and the 2d and 4th much longer than the rest?

G. Some reasons for these, as for most other things, must surpass our reach. But the following seem plain, First, The precepts are negative or prohibitory; because mankind were corrupted, and the Israelites in particular, to whom they were first given, were prone to indulge in contrary practices. Secondly, The two prolixer commands were

not so plainly founded on natural evidence, and therefore needed more to be enforced by revelation. Thirdly, These commands are more full, both in the preceptive parts and sanctions; because the lawgiver knew how prone his subjects were to these two vices, namely, idolatry and profaning of the sabbath. And methinks it is no contemptible intrinsic evidence of the divine origin of these laws, that even professing Christians have run into such idolatry as the church of Rome, and that most Christians keep the sabbath or Lord's day, with so little cheerfulness and purity. He must have known the human heart well, who calculated his laws so properly.

C. That last argument I think is needless. Moses indeed, appears to have been a man of great penetration and natural abilities: but the argument from intrinsic excellence and depth of scheme, is much stronger for the gospel or Christianity, as being taught by unlearned and simple fisher-men. There may be some possibility, that so great a genius as Moses, might contrive and adjust his laws with great propriety. The apostles were far from such art or natural capacity.

A. But is there any probability that even Moses could form the cloud, fire and great voice, which about two millions of people saw and heard pronouncing these laws at mount Sinai? Exod. xx. and Deut. v. chap.

Review these laws, all wrote with God's own hand
 On leaves of stone that might for ever stand;
 And would, or like been forg'd as reliques fine,
 Were't not that greatest part, east, west, combine
 To break best precepts by transgression gross,
 And to such rules prefer a rotten cross;
 Rules high and pure, above all laws on earth,
 As half-grown youth's above a child at birth.

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Though Moses too, from God makes Israel hear
 Not purest rites; but such as they could bear:
 And by himself, and sacrifices shows
 That middle friend which nature scarcely knows;
 With priests and Levites all distinctly fix'd,
 That heathenish orders none might there be mix'd,

55

This learn'd great minister likely compos'd
 Job's interlude sublime. He surely pros'd
 The sacred story, half five thousand years:
 Most elegant and true he still appears,

60

M. To review your poetry now read, you represent the moral law as written on two leaves, usually called, tables of stone, to denote and insure their durability. The folly of neglecting it, is satirised as preferring forgeries of our Saviour's cross, many cart loads of rotten wood being kept for such, as I have heard, and worshipped in popish countries; while these commands are disregarded, and the ad in a manner abolished. Your image of a new-born child and youth, I think might be mended, by comparing Pagan morality to an infant, Jewish to a youth, and Christian to a full grown person. You also hint at the nature and chief uses of the ceremonial law, and describe Moses as an excellent writer and historian.

A. That is clear. But methinks, it will be more useful, to review the wise order and compleatness of the moral law, and of each of its tables or parts; thus, the rules for divine worship are most properly set foremost, on account of the excellence of the object: and the particulars relating to it, are these

four, 1. The object of worship, 2. Its means or instruments, 3. Its manner, 4. Its peculiar time. These are most orderly regulated by the four laws of the first table. Then, as honour and obedience to parents natural, civil, and religious, is of highest moment for the peace and welfare of society, this is enjoined by the next precept, with a suitable encouragement. And four highest earthly interests of mankind, are guarded most wisely by the four next prohibitions, namely, life, chastity, property and reputation.

W. Is it not a defect in these laws, that there is no guard for liberty? nor plain rule for inward or home-duties?

G. Nay, there is scarce any thing so strongly recommended as these two. The great value of liberty is represented in the preface, by God delivering the Israelites from Egyptian slavery; and its true nature is insinuated, as consisting in the observance of good laws. Our duty to or in ourselves, is also strongly enjoined by a prohibition, in the tenth precept, of lust and covetousness the chief corrupters of the human heart.

But further look ! and see yon num'rous camp,
 Traversing far, or nearer, by the lamp
 Of fire or cloud directed, 'midst waste hills :
 How cloaths wear not, how manna strange them fills,
 Made double for seventh day, long time ! and then 65
 Descending pleas'd to Jordan's flow'ry plain ;
 Where, Moses gone, the next shews signs. Pray, mark !
 It is not night, but broad-day. And the ark
 As signal plain comes to the river's brink :
 The waters part ; stand up in hills, or shrink 70
 Back to their source. Through bottom dry for hours,
 A numerous train with babes and cattle pours ;
 And fix twelve stones in midst. This finish'd out,
 The flood comes down as usual : and the rout
 Is taken to yon walled town. You see't 75
 By seven coarse trumpets of rams horn, on feet
 Compass the place seven days, and on the last
 Circl't seven times : with shouting the seventh blast
 Lays flat the stoutest walls. Behold ! on sight
 God Israel gives to Jericho his right ! 80

C. In the large portion now read, you sing four lasting miracles, strong for confirmation of the divine interposition and authority of the Mosaic institutions, 1. The shechina, or directing pillar of fire by night, and cloud by day. 2. The people's cloaths and shoes not wearing out for so long a time. 3. The extraordinary manna. 4. That's being doubled every sixth, to supply the seventh day or sabbath. The rest of these lines relates the passage of Jordan, and taking of Jericho under Joshua.

A. In the first of these two, you see an objection is obviated, which might be raised against the miracle at the Red-sea, as it was done in the night time ; whereas Jordan stopped and was passed in clear day. And you'll imagine, what is said about the water standing up in hills refers to Psal. cxiv. where these two miracles are very poetically described

C. Perhaps not so poetically as some i-

mage. Speaking to mountains as to persons, is certainly poetical and figurative enough ; comparing their motion to rams or lambs is no less so. But it is very probable, that Jordan stood like hills above its channel, and was moved in vast waves up and down, without overflowing the country ; that people, who, for fear of the Israelites, durst not approach to see the dried ford, might see the wonders at a distance from the fields, and particularly off the walls of Jericho. Nor is the manner of taking that town, less plainly miraculous. Jordan was often fordable: the hill-like standing and tide-like motion of its waters, seem to have been equally a part and evidence of the miracle. And to see strong walls sink, or fall flat at once, without mines, or any means but the triffing-like blowing of rams horns, and shouting ! surely this must be the hand of God ! See Joshua iii. iv. and vi. chapters.

Look on, and see a greater sign! which made
 This Jesus victor o'er five kings in league.
 The sun seem'd to stand still, or really stood
 For ten long hours, thought days by his who flood
 Escap'd, the righteous preacher, and far east
 His seat in China fix'd: while farther west,
 This sun prodigious hot, and countries burn'd
 Might, like, to fabled Phaeton be turn'd;
 And matching a long night with that long day,
 Adult'rous Jove 'got Hercules, they say.

85

90

M. You now give ten lines on one miracle, a remarkable one indeed! but I don't see it has much connection with the law of Moses. And why call you the time of this wonder *ten long hours*? It is a whole day in Joshua, and I think, in the Chinese annals, it is ten days. How do these consist, or connect with Phaeton and Hercules?

A. Your first question is easily answered, That the observance of the moral law, was a condition of the Israelites obtaining the promised land, as in Deut. viii. 1. and so this being given in such a miraculous manner, was a strong confirmation of the law they were to obey. I own, that the application here made of this miracle, is somewhat new, and needs explication. Most older commentators on Joshua (whom we call here by his Greek name Jesus) interpret this solstice as apparent only; but Calmet and Stackhouse are very clear for its reality, i. e. according to the Copernican or Newtonian system, the earth's being stop'd in its diurnal rotation. And Mod. Univ. History of China, finds great probability that it was so; and fixeth the Chinese chronology thereby purely, allowing Noah to be their Fo-hi, and founder of that empire. In their ancient books, according to such translations as we have, it is indeed ten days, that the sun is said to have stood in the reign of Fo-hi, but it is believed, that what is rendered *days* may be meant of ten watches, or such partitions, that ten of them come to what we call an artificial day. In this view I call it

ten long hours, thought days by his viz. posterity, who flood escap'd, namely Noah, *the righteous preacher*. In Joshua x. 13. 'tis ask'd, Is not this written in the book of Jasher? Jasher is a Hebrew word signifying *righteous*. It is the very name given to Noah by God himself in Gen. vii. 1. And it is probable, that Joshua, and David who refers to the same book 2 Sam. i. 18. did mean Noah, whose institutions for recording astronomical and military observations, might be continued then in Judea, as they are in China to this day. And as Joshua says, that the sun hasten'd not to go down, though spoken of as in the midst of heaven, it may well be implied, that, tho' still high, he was some two or three hours past the meridian of Palestine when he stood; and consequently, being above much of Greece and Africa, would naturally scorch the places mentioned by Ovid, as burnt by Phaeton's irregular driving of the sun, and give occasion to that fable. The ancient Hercules too, is, by most learned men, as Bochart, Huetius, &c. taken for Joshua. And no such likely reason can be assigned as that hinted in our text. And Phaeton being thought just 24 years of age at this solstice, was a most likely age for the fabled adventure.

G. All probable. You'll see these things further illustrated in Mod. Univ. Hist. vol. viii. pag. 358. to 367. with Shuckford and Stackhouse.

AS Moses, late, by feats in Egypt earn'd,
At weedy-sea, and Sinai, was confirm'd,
To settle civil and religious rites;
So now was Joshua to end debates,
To conquer, and divide by lot, the lands
Though promis'd, yet possess'd by wicked bands.

Can these, or be th' effect of magic art?
Or forg'd by the whole nation in concert?
As well might forc'ry nations make or kill,
And nature all o'erturn by frantic will:
As well almost you London all might fix,
That Thames ran dry in April sixty fix;
Or that the war was feigned, and the peace
Whereby French right to Canada did cease.

C. In several hints you are not discreet to him, whom the ancient poets call father of gods and men. He is introduced with ravish'd maids, then called parricide, and now adulterous. The civility we owe to those of different religions, perhaps should have softened, or kept out such expressions.

A. If we were living among, or even writing to, old and fixt believers in Jupiter, what you say might be of some weight: but as we live among rational Christians, and write for lovers of pure truth; I see no indiscretion or indelicacy in these plain expressions. Hesiod to me seems harsher when he sings, how this deity, with premeditated design, prepared a vast saw-teeth hook, and by night catching his father Saturn's genitals in his left hand, sheered them off with the terrible sickle in his right. Nor is the story of Amphitryon more decent, whatever comedies have been wrote upon it from Plautus down to this age.

W. Bury these! and let me lecture a little on the subject of this page. It first sums up the evidence of miracles, both as to Moses and Joshua, with the special purpose of such confirmed authority; in the one to establish religion, and in the other to subdue and divide the promised land. 2. It appeals

to the reader's judgment, whether these miracles could be the productions of magic, or forgery; with several illustrations to the contrary. Every body knows, that the malicious Jews imputed our Saviour's miracles to devilish art, Mat. xii. 24. And the later Jews ascribe them, to use of the tetragrammaton or sacred name, which they alledge he stole from the temple. Absurd as these evasions are, they are scarce so inconsistent as the alledgeance of forcery prevailing here, when the Egyptian most able magicians had failed in the contest, and owned the divine power to be with Moses. Beside, the miracles at the Red, or weedy-sea as you name it, these in the wilderness, at Jordan and Gibeon, were of a more noticeable and public kind, than even those performed by Christ. So that it seems impossible, that such facts should flow from forcery, or the Jewish records of them from forgery. And you might without any *almost* say,

As probably you London all may fix,
That Thames drown'd Southwark in the
sixty six.

A. Modesty can do no harm. And you may observe a similitude in the season and conquest referred to. See Gen. xv. 16. and Joshua x.—xxi. chapters.

'Tis true, the facts in Palestine are old,
 Nor quite impossible that forgers bold,
 Like India's Vedam, or legends of Rome,
 In some dark age might make false records soon
 To be deem'd true, were not the writings pure,
 Grand and consistent morals to insure;
 Modest, sublime; with precepts excellent
 Confirm'd by train of prophets eminent,
 Who things predicted as fulfilled late;
 Of Jericho's rebuilder, Cyrus great
 By name express'd an age before: and, chief,
 Of the high Saviour kind to fix belief.

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M. In this you obviate an objection, which may arise from the antiquity of the facts, and from books which some Indian nations hold as sacred, as also from Romish legends. You might have added the Jewish Cabbala and Talmuds, equally believed by that people. As to these, 'tis plain that antiquity by itself is rather a presumption of truth by having stood the test of many ages. As to Indian books, our accounts of them are very imperfect. And if we join the superstitious character of the people, with the absurdity of the doctrines contained in these very imperfect accounts, we need not be much surpris'd, or at all shaken in our faith by these Indian bibles. As to the legendary stories of later Jews or Papists, they are all trifling, ill-attested, and least regarded by their wisest men. It was the reverse with the miracles and sacred books of the Israelites. They were grand, and often published to the whole people. Their best kings and whole nation owned their authenticity. The rites, very burdensome ones, appointed by them were observed from the very facts, down through every age. And therefore, beside the consideration of intrinsic excellence, consistency and pure morals, to which the Indian, Cabbalistic, and Popish stories have no pretension, it would be more absurd to imagine the Mosaic records forged in later times, than it would be to alledge

so, as to our old acts of parliament, or charters publickly registred and cloathed with possession. Some of these are of longer standing, than from Moses to David or Solomon, and yet of undoubted credit. And notwithstanding the long impious reign of Manasseh, and the Babylonish captivity, the Jewish state from the days of Solomon was so regular, and connected with neighbouring nations, that any forgery of their records, or material alteration of their civil and religious institutions, is quite incredible.

A. There is another evidence against any falsification in these matters, namely a succession of prophets, most faithful writers, who carry on the history of the Israelites, and foretell very distant contingencies. The two prophecies concerning Jericho and Cyrus, in Josh. vi. 26. and Isai. xlv. 28. with their accomplishments, in 1 Kings xvi. 34. and Ezra i. 1. are very remarkable. I think it was 530 years between the prediction and fulfilment of the first, and near 200 as to the latter, which I call an age as not being quite two centuries. We might also have mentioned the prophecy of Josiah by name, about 350 years before his birth, 1 Kings xiii. 2 with 2 Kings xxiii. 16. But there being less possibility of Cyrus being so named by human design, next to the Messiah (of whom more immediately) the prophecies of him seem most noticeable.

As Pentateuch foretold the woman's seed,
 And Judah's rule till Shiloh pure succeed,
 A kindred prophet like to Moses meek,
 To whom for wisdom Jews at last should seek;
 So sequent prophets these dark types unfold,
 That a true virgin should conceive, and hold
 God join'd with us, who high salvation round
 The globe should spread, and tread vice to the ground.
 That he as God's anointed servant high,
 Should deign to suffer, and in grave to lie
 For us: be born in Bethl'em, and to live
 A Nazarene; to die, and yet survive:
 With many other circumstances clear,
 As time describ'd by Daniel to an year.

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C. I perceive that our notes and criticisms will need further explanation, like the notes upon notes in M. Bayle's Dictionary, as much perhaps as your text itself.

A. Methinks, we give some light; but may leave what is further needful, to the diligence of readers, or of teachers, if ever this summary shall come to be honoured. But in general, these prophecies, especially of the Messiah, when set together must have great weight, both to evince that Jesus was the Messiah foretold, and to prove the divine inspiration of the sacred writers.

W. I am sensible of that; but at the same time must observe, that these prophecies when taken singly, are somewhat obscure and need explication.

G. It is a common and not unjust observation, that it belongs to the nature or design of prophecies, to be a little obscure; but to enter into a particular illustration of these here, would far exceed our bounds. Kidder's demonstration of the Messiah elucidates them very fully. There was indeed one Mr. Collins, about 40 years ago, who made a keen attack on these prophecies, or their application in the New Testament. His literal scheme of prophecy, was sufficiently answered by a good many learned pens, particularly by two Chandlers; one a bishop, the other an eminent dissenting

minister in London. His book alone may give satisfaction on this subject. Or, a simple view of the sacred texts, which the above verses refer to, may almost suffice without a commentary. They are Gen. iii. 15. xlix. 10. Deut. xviii. 15. Isai. vii. 14. and ix. 6, 7. xlix. 6. and liii. throughout. Dan. ix. 24.—27. Micah v. 2. compared with Mat. and the other Evangelic historians.

W. I remember to have read a long discourse on Daniel's 70 weeks, in Prideaux's Connections. But I see your argument here, is not so directly to prove Jesus to be the Messiah of the Old Testament, as to show the divine origin of the scriptures in general; in which respect it seems very strong, since we cannot conceive, how any human or created foresight could conjecture such contingent and unlikely events, from 4000 down to 400 years beforehand. Not only the length of time, but so many different authors, prophetically describing such variety of very particular and uncommon circumstances, with their coming to pass accordingly; must render our disbelief of this revelation nearly as unreasonable as downright atheism. Though the marks of design and wisdom, may be more numerous in nature; yet in this revelation, they are exceeding many, grand, and convincing as one could expect.

Now, 'tis most sure that such unlike events,
 No human sight could guess, which much invents :
 Nor, since the records of the Jewish state,
 A curious king of Egypt caus'd translate,
 And publish in the learned Grecian tongue,
 Through the wide empire of king Philip's son
 (Whose rage a dream and Jewish priestly train,
 Once sooth'd. Ah ! Turks at sad Otranto's fane)
 Before th' events two centuries and more ;
 'Tis altogether bootless to explore
 A method, how these prophecies should hit,
 But that they are divine, not counterfeit.

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So early and so wide some warning ran,
 That China's sage expected holy one
 Should come from west. And through the Roman state
 A rumour went, That one ordain'd by fate,
 In east should rise to bear extended sway
 O'er ev'ry nation, like the rising day.

55

A. For understanding this passage, you'll observe that Ptolemy Philadelphus king of Egypt, near 280 years before Christ, applied to the high priest of the Jews, and got 70 or 72 persons of ability to translate, for his library at Alexandria, at least the books of Moses into the Greek language, which occasioned the other parts of the Old Testament to be soon after translated into the same tongue. This language, thro' Alexander's conquests, was at that time, and for some ages after, of most universal use. See Hoddy and Prideaux.

W. I see the Septuagint version must be a strong bar against suspicion of foul play, as to the sacred prophecies in favour of Christianity, since such vast notoriety made it impracticable, without detection, to forge them after the events. But your parenthesis about king Philip's son, makes a tedious sentence still longer, and too darkly alludes to facts not commonly known. You should also explain the matter relating to China's Sage, and the more western rumour.

G. I own the verses concerning the Septuagint, may be too languid instead of being

simple ; but the parenthesis you object to, is designed to enliven the period, by a short poetical touch on another argument for the special interposition of heaven in favours of the Jews ; when their high priest quite overcame Alexander's resentment against that people, for their refusing to supply his army at the siege of Tyre, by a procession in pontificalibus when that furious warrior was coming against Jerusalem : which, as a stratagem, the Abp. of Otranto in Italy trying on Mahomet II. sultan of the Turks in 1480, was miserably destroyed by that tyrant. Nor should facts be deemed not commonly known, which are told in so common books as Stackhouse's History of the Bible vol. V. and Universal Gazetteer at the word Otranto.

As to the early warnings and far-spread rumours, the first refers to Confucius, the great Chinese reformer, see Mod. Univ. History vol. VIII. page 417. &c. The other relates to the History of Suetonius and Tacitus, which you may see translated, in Wait's Gospel History, note on page 16.

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COME, see ! how Jesus meek took human form,
 In fittest time of light and freedom born ;
 When, with the Roman pow'r, letters prevail'd,
 And oracles obscure in credit fail'd :
 When Jewry was dispersed far and near,
 Yet oft went home to worship thrice a year ;
 Jesus the Christ into his temple came,
 Foretold its ruin, as he purg'd the same.
 Unlike to augurs and their worthless train,
 He saw his death, and when he'd rise again ;
 Predicted both : how of the twelve he sent,
 One would betray, deny him one, repent !

5

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W. I remember to have read a sermon of Foster, on the fitness of the time when our Saviour appeared. And it is plainly of no small importance to observe, how a time of learning, peace, liberty, and extensive empire was most proper, for giving solid credit, and a more easy spread to the doctrine, miracles and prophecies of Christ; and how opposite circumstances would have rendered these more difficult and doubtful. But what way the failing of Heathen oracles happened about that time, or contributed to these purposes, I do not so well understand.

A. At what precise time these oracles ceased, or what was the cause of that cessation is disputed among the learned. But whether it was by miraculous restraint, or by the increase of knowledge and polite learning, which naturally diminisheth credulity; in either of these cases, the ceasing of such oracles, so remarkable at that time as to engage the attention of philosophers, (and of which the good-natured Plutarch wrote a book) must give some confirmation and strength to Christianity. Nor was the then state of the Jews less favourable to the quick-spreading and establishment of this faith, than the state of the empire and learning. See Acts ii. 9.—11.

C. I perceive that your expression,

Jesus the Christ into his temple came, refers to Mal. iii. 1. But you are far from keeping the order of time, when you join his purging the temple with his foretelling

its ruin; though I own that such opposite-like acts render the accomplishment of the prophecy rather more remarkable. But the other predictions, you seem to express too short and obscurely.

G. Jesus at two different times ejected the abusers of the temple. And if you compare John's gospel ii. 15. and 19. Mat. xxiv. 2. and xxvi. 34. and 69.—75. and xxvii. 3.—10. with the parallel places, you may see both the meaning and strength of the predictions in our four last verses. There are four prophecies in these four lines, introduced by the notable story of the augur and bird, to whose ignorance Jesus is opposed as seeing, that is, foreseeing, and predicting his own death and resurrection, with the material circumstances of both these events. As also, of his twelve apostles, that one would betray him, and another deny him; who should both repent, but in different manners, Peter to conversion, and Judas to ruin. And surely these four, The death, the resurrection, the betraying, and the denying of Christ, so improbable in themselves, and foretold by him with so many circumstances as they actually came to pass, are very strong evidences of his divine character.

W. I must allow that your comment betters the text. And on reading your quotations and parallels I hope for still more satisfaction.

D 2

Hear this great prophet tell, how figures vile
 Should stand in holy place, and it defile;
 What desolation o'er that land should spread;
 How happy those who timeously had fled:
 How these should suffer, Antichrist arise
 To domineer o'er man, and God despise
 Through pride and lying wonders. See how true!
 In Romish tyranny, and scatter'd Jew!

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These, more than miracles of strength, declare
 The true God, and his word by knowledge rare;
 Which, when fulfill'd, afford the clearest proof,
 That they inspir'd were by the God of truth:
 And when appeal'd to, likewise do confirm
 The other doctrines which these teachers bring.
 And while the proofs by works in strength decrease,
 These by fulfill'd predictions rise reverse,
 'Till Jews brought in, and Antichrist o'erturn'd,
 Church then shall vie with those who Jesus mourn'd.

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M. In the first eight of these verses, you call us to attend to two very remarkable prophecies, viz. The dispersion of the Jews, and tyranny of popish Rome with the chief circumstances of both. Whoever will be at the pains to compare Mat. xxiv. 15.—22. 2 Theff. ii. 3.—4. and Rev. xvii. with the events recorded by Josephus, and others even not Christian writers, as to the Jews; and F. Paul's History of the Council of Trent, with Guicciardine and other histories of the court of Rome, I think must be satisfied of the prophetic spirit in Christ. And it surpris'd me to find Mr. Stackhouse explaining the text to the Thessalonians otherwise.

A. You will scarce find a man of thought, who has not some peculiarities. And popish writers have so darkened that text (on which Stackhouse comments vol. VI. page 510. and 511.) that it is no great wonder he should differ from the generality of protestants. But notwithstanding the difficulties, and many mistakes in computing the beginning of Antichrist's reign; yet considering the idolatry, the pretended infallibility, the persecuting and deceitful spirit of that church for several ages past, one will see it

hard to find out a prophecy more strongly marked, and more fully applicable than that in 2 Theff. is to the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome; especially, if it be joined, as seems reasonable, with the city on seven hills and other characters in the Revelations.

C. I see in the last ten verses, that you distinguish miracles into two kinds, those of knowledge, and those of strength. And it is asserted, I think indeed justly, that the first of these kinds, is a stronger proof of divine being, interposition and authority than the other. But why don't you give a stroke at D. Hume, who will allow no miracles at all?

A. You know we would much rather commend, than blame such ingenious gentlemen. And without naming him or his problems, we have been endeavouring to make the bible records and miracles, appear not only credible, but certain. As to the difficulty from miracles not happening in our days; it seems very plain there has been sufficiency of them, when they continued till Christianity was established by Constantine. Such as would see more against this Mr. Hume, may read Campbell's Answer, and Macqueen's Letters.

FROM Joshua down, judges, kings, prophets true
 Had little need of sign'd credentials new;
 As now no laws or lands were to be giv'n,
 But former kept, and swervers back be driv'n
 To pure obedience. But when woman's seed
 Was to abolish rites by heav'n decreed,
 And to extend the church before confin'd;
 So then, as proper, miracles we find
 By Jesus wrought, many, but not so grand
 As Sinai's thunder, or the Red-sea's strand:
 More like Isaiah's turning shadow back,
 Or Daniel, friends', and Jonah's 'scaping wrack.
 H' Elijah or Elisha-like wrote nought,
 Nor like them kill'd; but dead to life he brought.

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C. In this transition from Old to New Testament miracles, you give a plain reason, why there was less need of such credentials being repeated, and yet we find a great many miracles in the times of the judges, as well as by the five prophets whom you have now named. The reason of these, with the succession or order of the prophets, I wish to hear distinctly.

A. If Mr. Hume's objection before mentioned, be natural, frequent miracles would be of use even to good Israelites, for removing that difficulty; and more to bad Jews, to awaken, or drive them to true obedience: and also to shew the exuberance of divine power, as we observed formerly from Abbé Pluche of seeds and other productions of nature, than which these miracles were no more in vain. But, especially as Joshua's solstice might be observed thro' the whole earth to make all mankind enquire after the true God, so many of these miracles being done out of Canaan, were plainly designed to convert the neighbouring nations.

W. These are two lovely thoughts, that the evidence by prophecies gathers strength as that by miracles loses it, and that God regarded the good of all or many, even in his actings by the Jews.

A. I was coming to the order of time among the prophets, though this being over-

looked in our Bibles, I might well take the same liberty. The two mentioned in the last of our verses, were a sort of *nexus utriusque mundi sive foederis*. Elijah resembled Moses in several awful miracles; but typified John the Baptist in his ascetic life and not writing. He began to prophecy about 900 years before Christ, which was a little earlier than mid-time 'twixt Moses and our Saviour. Elisha was only a few years later. He was like Joshua in stopping Jordan, and some other miracles; but like Christ in not writing books, and in raising one from the dead. Jonah was the next in time, about 60 years after Elisha. Joel is thought next to him, about 800 years before Christ. Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk and Nahum prophesied in the order of time they are now named, from 790 to 610 before Christ. Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel lived before and in the time of the captivity from 630 to 534 before Christ; Haggai and Zechariah soon after, and Malachi last of all, about 400 before our Saviour. Among these prophets Isaiah and Daniel, were as eminent for writing and long lives, as St. Paul and John were among the apostles. Scriptures in view are Judges vi. and xiii. chap. 1 Sam. iii. and v. 1 Kings xvii. and xviii. 2 Kings i.—viii. Isaiah xxxviii, 8. Dan. iii. and vi. and Jonah i. 10.

Like his sweet dispensation greatly mild,
 'Bove Egypt's hail, darkness, or first-born kill'd,
 Jesus made blind to see and deaf to hear,
 The dumb to speak, lame walk, and gracious year
 To poor proclaim'd: so many thousands fed,
 As dozens would be pinch'd on the same bread:
 Yet more remain'd: some dead to life he rais'd;
 Drove daemons or distraction from the craz'd;
 Rose from the dead himself; and Spirit sent
 His preachers to endow with tongues unlearn't.
 Strange! and important, that they soon might teach
 His truths and pow'r through lands of ev'ry speech;
 And found abroad what modestly he hid,
 Of wond'rous cures and rising from the dead.

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W. You have neglected to show the difference between Joshua's and Isaiah's solstices. I observe indeed, they are somewhat differently express'd in the sacred texts; and though Isaiah says, 'So the sun returned ten degrees,' that is most probably to be explained by the preceding words in Isaiah xxxviii. 8. 'Behold, I will bring again the shadow;' especially since this falls within the historic period of time, but is not mentioned by ancient history; whereas Joshua's solstice being in the fabulous period, is sufficiently marked by Phaeton and Hercules their stories. But as to this page, though you speak very honourably of our Saviour's miracles, I don't see that you take notice of their vast numbers. Mr. Stackhouse I think observes, that he did more in four years, than had been done under Moses and all the prophets. And you seem to think that miracles are only samples of power or goodness according to their different effects.

A. That is not my opinion. For tho' miracles be indeed samples, or rather direct proofs, of the power, justice, or goodness exerted in them; yet I am far from thinking that such is their only use. Other purposes, particularly as a proof of doctrines will be shewn in the next chapter. But on

this, don't you see in these words;

Jesus made blind to see &c.

a chain of miracles, and at the same time the fulfilment of remarkable prophecies in Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6. and lxi. 1. compared with Luke vii. 22.

M. That is visible. But might you not have enumerated our Saviour's miracles more fully, with the particular use of each, to produce the belief or other ends they are designed for?

A. Such enumeration is done to our hand, in one of the tables at the end of Mr. Wait's History. I would here only observe, that of the 32 miracles related by the Evangelists, only two are of the harsh or severe kind, viz. his destroying a number of swine at one time, and a barren fig-tree at another. These you may see vindicated in the Answers to Woolston. And it is sufficiently plain, that even these were more instructive than hurtful to men; as all the rest are purely beneficent. His curing most distressing and inveterate diseases, raising three different persons from the dead, feeding eight or ten thousand with a little bread and three fishes, rising from the dead himself, and bestowing the gift of tongues at pentecost, are discanted on as most remarkable.

His heralds thus, witnesses unsuspect
 Of resurrection, spread without neglect
 His doctrine pure, accompany'd with signs
 Rather more striking than his own; designs
 To carry worthy God, and far above
 All earthly objects, honour, gain, or love
 Of ease: but in the face of danger, death,
 And ev'ry hardship, stood to their last breath
 Defenders of the truths of their great Lord;
 Truths which to man most happiness afford!

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And not by transient voice, but writings sure
 These truths they plant, to spread and to endure;
 Writings confirm'd by others, friends and foes,
 Down to this day, as Lardner modest shows:
 More reason'd on by learning of Macknight,
 Whose harmony of gospels gives much light.

40

M. From describing the miracles of Christ, I see you come to the confirmation thereof by the testimony of the apostles in word, miracles and writings, which I own are very strong. As these seem plain enough to the attentive, I shall venture to give you another rhyme of the loaves, thus,

He fed some thousands, yet left frag-
 ments more

Than all the bread and fish he had before.

A. Not bad! If this essay succeed, it may slip into the text in some future edition, and cannot be more ridiculed than Sir R. Blackmore's whale——made

To spout on heav'n, if fire should heav'n
 invade!

I shall add another couplet on the nature of our blessed Saviour's miracles,

His works all kind; no more but two severe,
 Drowning vile swine, and cursing fig-tree
 bare.

W. These sink like the swine, and are rather barer than the fig-tree, which had leaves. But leaving that scriblerian vein, let us seriously consider, as becomes us, the character of the apostles and evangelists in three different views, viz. as witnesses of the resurrection; as teachers of Christianity; and as ancient authors or writers. On the first, I observe, that they were not two or three only to determine life or death;

but twelve to fix truth for eternity: they were not led by art or enthusiasm; but warned, wary and slow: they had no bribing views of earthly honour, gain or ease; but the prospect of sufferings, of ignominy and death. In a word, they had best grounds of knowledge, and no temptation to prevaricate or deceive.

A. That is cleared in two pamphlets, called *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection*, and the *Apostles no Enthusiasts*. As to the character of the apostles as teachers, to describe their wise zeal, their indefatigable labours, their salutary doctrines and exemplary lives, would far exceed our room in this place. See *Cave's Lives of the Apostles*, *Stanhope on the Gospels and Epistles*, *Benson on the Acts &c.* And for the third, their simplicity, and even elegance or sublimity as writers, you may read *Boyle on the stile of scripture*, *Blackwell's Sacred Classics* and others. But for the continued confirmation of succeeding writers, no one treats it so fully as *Lardner* in his many volumes on the *Credibility*, nor perhaps any so nervously as *Macknight* in his *Truth of the Gospel shewed*. And for sacred texts referred to, see *Acts* i. 20, 22. and ii. 32. and viii. 4. with the rest of that book; to which add *John* xiv. 12. *Mat.* viii. 32. xiv. 20. xv. 37. and *xxi.* 19, 20.

THE Jewish church was like a boy at school,
 Confin'd and threaten'd not to play the fool;
 The Christian like a man or nation free,
 To travel and improve by land or sea.
 But yet as boys 'tis not amiss we ask,
 What was the purpose wise of wond'rous task,
 Which Jesus, and his teachers, did pursue,
 By miracles and sufferings great and new?

Two purposes 'tis plain, strange works may serve;
 To rouse attention and make all observe.
 Truth is so nat'ral to the mind of man;
 Give hearing fair, reject it if you can.
 And nothing fitter to awake our minds,
 Than great and wond'rous works of diff'rent kinds.

C. The first four of these lines, might in my apprehension, as well have been left out, or put into the preceding chapter; tho' they paint tolerably well, the image of the Jewish and Christian churches. The next four, contain a question which is a proper enough introduction to our treating of the uses of miracles, which fill so considerable a part of the writings both of the Old and New Testaments. But I see no good reason for your bringing in the sufferings of Christ here, as these are the subject of a separate chapter.

A. I cannot say that the divisions of chapters here, are very exact or systematic; being made, like those of the Bible, not originally in the composition, but superinduced afterwards for more easy reference or quotation. But as to the matter, not a few people, even some protestant teachers, object against our enquiring critically into the grounds and evidences of Christianity, alleging that most persons are incapable of such reasoning. If this was really the case, why should so much of the Bible consist of facts which are the foundation of these evidences, though they may serve other purposes at the same time. And, if such incapacity in the generality of people be allowed,

I'm afraid it will be a short step, to reckon them also incapable of being influenced to good practice, by arguments of gratitude, hope or fear. The human understanding seems as adequate to the former use, as the heart is to the latter. In a word, it seems not so much want of capacity in the people, as want of inculcating these evidences by teachers, that gives occasion to this objection, and renders the religion of many so unsettled and feeble.

M. It is extremely evident to me, that such religion as is not built upon rational conviction, but either on custom or blind affection, must fail both in giving true comfort to the possessor, and firmness to resist the manifold temptations in the world.

G. That is my view of the matter. And to remedy such a practical error, is the chief design of the present essay. We need only further observe on this page, two purposes of miracles; one is to waken attention, which is so plain (and the strength of truth when attended to, I may say, so well expressed above) that it can scarce want further illustration: another end of miracles is to beget faith, the manner of their producing which effect will be considered immediately on the next page.

A second end of miracles is faith,
 In pow'r and truth of what the worker faith.
 All who believe a good and righteous God,
 Will see that works quite above nature's mode,
 Appealed to for truth of doctrines taught;
 Doctrines self-worthy, and by no means fraught
 With vice or meanness, are the strongest seal,
 That heav'n approves, and doth such truths reveal.
 Egypt's, Tyana's, and Samaria's fools
 Were all o'erpower'd, and nought but idols tools.

20

The same good use wise sufferings promote,
 Men to arouse, and from their minds to blot,
 All doubt of views sinister in their faith,
 Who seal their testimonies with their death.

25

W. Beside these two ends of miracles which you mention, I think there is a third, namely to reward or punish in some extraordinary cases. But it is more to the present purpose, to shew how true and false miracles are distinguished, with their nature and manner of producing rational faith.

A. These I shall do as clearly as I can, thus. A miracle in general is, an uncommon operation striking the senses with wonder, and surpassing the known powers of the visible agent to perform. In a large sense, miracles are of three kinds, natural, magical, and divine. These are more usually divided into true and false miracles; and the difficulty is almost insuperable to distinguish, or separate these with precision and certainty; because the effects of natural causes, and rather more, the power of created spirits, are so inscrutable to us, that in many instances it is impossible for one to say, This is, or is not, the work of nature, of *forcery*, or of God. As to confirmation by miracles, doctrines too may come under a triple distinction, 1. Some are so excellent and self-evident, that we need only attend to them, to understand and believe. 2. Some doctrines are so absurd or immoral, that no miracles can evince them to be divine. And,

3. A great many doctrines, as to the views of darkened mortals, are of a middle nature, i. e. neither so evidently true nor false, good nor bad, but to us they both need and may be confirmed by miracles. And the strength of this confirmation seems to stand thus, When we believe that there is an Almighty, good and holy God, who presides over the world; we cannot believe that he will enable, or permit any creatures, who publish plausible doctrines and appeal to their works for proof thereof, to produce such operations as are above the known powers of nature, or of the visible agent. And therefore, when such works are done and appealed to, without a superior miracle to confute them, or absurd doctrine to condemn them, they must be reckoned as seals from heaven. But when, either the doctrine is absurd, as atheism or idolatry; or greater miracles wrought in opposition, as in the three cases above; or both these concur, the miracles, call you them true or false, can beget no just faith. See Deut. xiii. 1.—3. with Calmet and other commentators thereon. As also Bp. Fleetwood on Miracles at large. And Stackhouse as to Simon Magus &c. vol. VI. pages 113, 310, and 440 of Edinburgh edition.

BUT Jesus' suff'rings still serv'd larger end,
 Sin to atone, and make just God our friend.
 Great part of ancient rites this darkly told,
 Which gospel light now clearly doth unfold:
 To free mankind from sacrifices dire, 5
 God to appease, and virtuous trust inspire.
 Though still some men this doctrine pure abuse,
 Supposing other's merit may excuse
 True reformation, and good pains to form
 Their hearts to virtue, and their lives t' adorn : 10
 Whereas, 'tis clear, that both in life and death,
 The Saviour strove to free men from God's wrath,
 By freeing them from sin in ev'ry shape ;
 From guilt by pardon, as from acts by hate.

W. Your few sententious notes on miracles, give me more clearness than Bp. Fleetwood's whole folio. You also before hinted at the usefulness of martyrs' sufferings; and now, you here show a superior design of Christ's, viz. to make atonement for sin, to reconcile a righteous God to reforming sinners, to encourage us in reformation, and excite to true progressive holiness. These are so plain that the abuse which you confute, seems most inexcusable. And it requires more patience than mine, to read or understand Dr. Owen on Justification.

A. Some prejudice against all big or critical books, makes you undervalue Dr. Owen and Dr. Fleetwood, though there is much learning and some useful knowledge to be found in them. But what do you think of Chubb's arguments against the satisfaction of Christ, and justification by his merits?

C. As I remember, his objection is to this purpose, That an innocent person suffering, must be so far from pleasing a just or wise ruler, and exciting others to goodness, that it destroys our notions of justice, laws and sanctions, and sets open a door to every irregularity and vice. And his argument, I think, might have weight, if the purpose of these vicarious sufferings was not told, or made known to us: but when that

is plainly declared, it is so far from confounding law and justice, that an innocent person, who has right to dispose of himself, who voluntarily offers, is admitted by the sovereign Judge, and cheerfully suffers in the room of offenders; shows, not only great generosity, but also high regard to law and its sanctions. And though there be difficulties in explaining the nature of imputation, there is nothing plainer in the New Testament, than that the great design of Christ's life and sufferings upon earth, was to honour or magnify the moral law, and please God by reconciling men to him and it.

G. There are two opposite errors in this matter. One, through pride or too much confidence in natural powers, imagining we have no need of a redeemer; another, through mistaken notion or pretence of magnifying free-grace, supposes we need only trust in him and we are safe. The first abuses nature, and the other perverts grace; both which ought to be considered as favours from God, and diligently improved to his honour in our holiness. See Fowler's Design of Christianity, compare Jo. Owen and Jo. Taylor on Justification &c. and believe Mat. i. 21. and v. 17.—20. Acts iii. 26. Rom. vi. 1.—12. 1 Cor. xv. 34. Tit. ii. 13, 12. Jam. ii. 26, Rev. xxii. 14, 15.

What shall we hate? if not that ugly cause
Of best friend's suffering to maintain God's laws;
That all might hate, and fear to disobey,
Might hopeful turn, and run in virtue's way.

15

Jesus, along with suffering graces, paid
Constant obedience pure, that never stray'd.
Through these conjoin'd the Mediator pleads,
On earth, in heav'n, for all that mankind needs,
And by his word requires we do the same,
Praying and praising God in his kind name;
That having access to the throne through him,
We should pray, watch, and strive against all sin;
And, trusting in his merits, chearful run
In steady order, like the nat'ral sun.

20

25

M. In this you prosecute what was begun on the last page, viz. The salutary purpose of our blessed Saviour's mediation. His great design was certainly to make us good. As we are sinners we cannot come to goodness, till first we fly from vice or sin. Nor can we fly from these till we hate them. So your first four verses above describe plainly, true repentance and the strongest motives to it; though some may alledge that you do not lay sufficient stress on original sin, or on faith and repentance.

A. I strive against, though I cannot quite overcome fancies and prejudices. To explain the nature or conveyance of original sin would be too tedious for this place. An ancient saying may suffice, That when we see a house on fire, it is wiser, to apply to extinguish it, than to spend time in enquiring about its rise and progress. Or, if your dislike at long criticisms be abated, you may consult Taylor on Orig. Sin, and on Romans, with many Bodies of divinity, particularly Ridgely's on that article.

W. Divines ought, and I may do so. But now we want your illustration of what follows concerning the Redeemer's intercession, and its influence on holiness.

G. On that I observe, that our Saviour's intercession is founded on the joint

merits of his passive and active obedience. You have already noticed, that Christ's sufferings are the strongest motive to true repentance. I shall now point out, how his intercession serves to promote a chearful course of holiness in us. Without hope of pardon, 'tis plain, offenders could have no encouragement to confess and forsake their bad courses. But both the promises of the gospel, and the example of our Saviour's mediating goodness, invite us powerfully to true reformation. His intercession in particular, which we know he exercised while he was upon earth, and still exercises in a far more exalted and prevalent manner in heaven; gives high encouragement for our application to the throne of grace through him, and to present our requests for others as well as ourselves. Now, frequent conversing as it were, with heaven in such a hopeful manner, must evidently influence us greatly, to the chearful imitation of his lovely character, and to the grateful obedience of the divine will. This is the plain moral effect, beside the spiritual aids which the gospel promiseth. The texts of holy writ in which the above matters are set before us, are Zech. xii. 10. Isaiah xlii. 21, Luke i. 74, 75. Eph. ii. 18. Heb. vii. 25, & Peter i. 23.—17.

COME next, and see! how Christ the outward forms
Of worship taught, to clear men of the thorns
Of superstitious pains; yet to maintain
Society divine, and vice restrain.

In Jewish law one day in sev'n was fixt,
For holy rest. With that the Scribes had mixt,
Bigotted strictness not to eat or heal,
Meat then prepar'd, or person ev'n in pale.
These rigid views the Saviour confutes,
From men in need, and sustenance of brutes.
Yet far from making common his own day,
He neither journey'd, nor indulg'd to play:
But constant taught or heard in synagogue;
To honour heav'n, not mov'd by silly vogue,
Nor yet neglecting tho' the priests were naught,
And doubtless triff'd when they pray'd or taught.

A. This page is still introductory to devotion, being designed to show, how properly the externals of religious worship, are ordered by Christ for preventing superstition, and leading men to best dispositions and purity. Particularly, as to the seventh day, which was expressly enjoined in one of the ten moral statutes, to be kept holy: but, both by some directions under Moses suited to that situation of the church, and especially by the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, much more strictness in some externals was then taught, than is agreeable to the institution. How Jesus refuted such errors, and laboured to extirpate superstitious abuses; you'll find in Mat. xii. 1.—12. Luke vi. 1.—12. and xiii. 14.—16. and xiv. 1.—6. with other places of the gospel.

C. There seems here to rise an objection against Christianity, as less perfect or more liable to abuse, than the Mosaic institution; because Moses gave precise rules for every rite and circumstance, but Christ by abolishing these, has left mankind to the light of reason only, which in your III. chap. is declared to be insufficient.

G. That objection will vanish on reviewing the matter, thus. The light of reason, or natural religion was found de-

fective for directing mankind to suitable rites of external worship. This appears in the many abominable rites of Paganism. These the Mosaic law guarded against, with much precision indeed, but with much burdenfomeness to prevent worse in that people. And though Jesus hath abolished the ceremonial parts of Moses's law, he has evidently cleared and greatly improved it, in cautions against Pagan rites, and in principles of pure devotion. So that men are, by no means, left under Christ to the light of nature only; though under necessary cautions and principles, most externals are now left to human discretion, to show that these are not much cared for by Christ, and ought not to be much contended about by us.

M. A good moral, I see, comes out of a bad objection. And for Christ's religious observance of the sabbath himself, and recommending it to others, see Luke iv. 16. and 31. As to the trifling of Jewish teachers in our Saviour's time, see Mat. vii. 29. and Tit. i. 14. And learn, that though Christ justly dissented from the Scribes and Pharisees; yet, through the whole time of his unspotted ministry, he did not separate from their synagogues.

Supposing men should pray, he us directs
 To form our wishes to the best effects :
 For thinking well of God, and his mild sway ;
 For moderation, of no vice the prey : 20
 To fix our hopes on his protection sure,
 And minds compose with these addressees pure,
 “ Parent of all supreme ! may thy blest name,
 “ And nature holy, spread in highest fame !
 “ May thy wise government of grace prevail, 25
 “ And superstition with all tyrants fail !
 “ May men through earth thy sacred will obey,
 “ To saints above approaching near as may !

W. You neglect to give an account, either of the substitution of the first for the seventh-day sabbath ; or, of the reasonableness of prayer in general. What is the cause of these omissions ?

A. As to the first, it is because the controversy is of too little importance for this work. You may consult Bodies of divinity on the fourth command. And methinks, the reason of that change is so plain, and the propriety of all Christians keeping the same day so evident ; that it is quite needless to dispute about it. Also, that prayer in public, private, and secret is a natural and improving duty, is so clear in reason, that it scarce needs illustration. Or, such as want to see more on this subject, may read among others, a Dialogue on Devotion after the manner of Xenophon, W. West's Dissertations, and for the insufficiency of nature's light to direct our wishes, read Plato's Alcibiades second, and Juvenal's tenth Satire.

M. I perceive you place the essence of prayer in desires, or *wishes* addressed to God : but since it is certain that he knows all our wants and sins, and is immutable ; there must be some difficulty to show, that the soliciting and confessing parts of prayer, are consistent with these divine perfections, or reasonable and useful to men. As to adoration and thanksgiving, they are plainly proper.

G. These difficulties about prayer, arising from the omniscience and immutability

of God, are near a-kin to the objections against our activity and accountableness arising from decrees and foreknowledge. Our natural sense or feeling refutes both, though we can't by very distinct speculations discuss either. Adoration and praise, you own to be just or proper. As these serve to raise our veneration and gratitude toward God ; so do supplications and confessions, tend to encrease our dependence and humility. And in general, our addressing an infinite Majesty, tends to compose our minds, hush our passions, and transform us into his image : I mean, when we act in such duties with attention, faith and sincerity. And as the greatest part of this form or pattern of prayer, which our Lord gives us, consists of petitions ; these contain the most proper and excellent desires for being cherished by such exercise.

C. It is evident that our Saviour begins with the most exalted objects, or extensive and public requests, why then do we usually prefer private to public matters, in the order of our prayers ?

A. We cannot justify such a custom, which, perhaps, too much obtains. Our blessed Saviour in perfect conformity to the tables of the law, and to reason itself, directs us to begin with the greatest objects. And it is highly proper, we should follow that order, in the ardour of desire, and even in priority of time. Texts referred to are, Jonah i. 5, 6. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Mat. vi. 5.—10.

- " Grant to us daily what our life requires ;
 " Of food and raiment mod'rate our desires. 30
 " Forgive our sins when we repent, and show
 " Mercy to us, as we do to our foe.
 " Nor let such trials hard us overtake,
 " But we may them o'ercome, or else escape.
 " 'Tis thine to have and give grace, glory, pow'r ;
 " For these we ask, and praise thee evermore ?" 35

All superstitious riot to prevent——

W. Stop, if you please, and let us consider more fully, the object, the several parts, and the excellence of this prayer, before you proceed to the cautions against superstition. And first, I would ask, whether the light of nature teaches, that God alone is the object of religious worship?

A. If we consider only what has happened in the world, your question must be answered in the negative. But though it is evidently reasonable, and improving to us, to esteem and praise every good being that we know, according to the degrees of its excellence: yet, the divine excellence is so far above that of all creatures, that reason plainly shows it incongruous to confound him with them. Beside, as we have no reason to believe that any creature knows, or has power to forgive and do us good in many instances; it is clearly unreasonable to make confessions, or supplications in such case. I shall only observe further on this, that as our Saviour in his doctrine confines our worship to God alone; so here he directs us to the most amiable and worthy view of the object of our worship, in this address or preface, Our Father who art in heaven!

C. You have not taken notice of the controversy, whether this is designed as a prayer, which we ought to use in the same words, or only as a directory for the matter?

G. Why not for both? It seems to me, equally bad, for persons or churches to use this prayer as a charm; or to disregard it as improper. But might you not usefully here,

give a prose-paraphrase of the six petitions, to make this versified one plainer?

M. I rather observe, that the first two lines above, or fourth petition, seems to be a contradiction to what was said before, of preferring matters of higher to those of lesser moment; as if our daily bread was of more consequence than forgiveness of sins.

G. Your observation might be hard upon the former, if this petition was meant to encrease, and not to moderate our desire of outward things. So it is worded above; and so the judicious West explains it, Dissert. V. And as all sin consists in, or flows from our preferring worldly things to God, this petition may be meant of faith and holiness, necessary to the forgiveness of sin. Now, as the three former petitions desire God's honour, and his authority, and his obedience to be advanced in the highest degree; so these three ask a humble, and forgiving spirit; with pardon of sins past, and preservation from them in time to come, which is an order most natural and instructive. As the conclusion or doxology sums up the whole, with a brevity and strength inimitable.

A. Allow me to hint, that the common rule of asking spiritual blessings absolutely, and temporal things conditionally; should rather be express, that we should ask every thing with a degree of earnestness suited to its excellence. Such proportioned affections exercised, will beget and cherish lovely harmony in heart and life. And not only the fifth, but every petition binds us, as by a vow, to proper conditions.

All superstitious riot to prevent,
 Our Saviour kept no birth-day, or of faint.
 His own birth-day most wisely was conceal'd;
 But when he died, and rose again reveal'd.
 On resurrection-day the Sp'rit he sent,
 In wond'rous gift of tongues; and thereby meant,
 His glorious holy-day to be observ'd
 In sacred memory of truth preserv'd.

W. You seem to be too much of a Puritan in this matter, though you do not oppose the keeping of birth-days, in civil, or sober and friendly manner. But, if our Saviour's birth-day was concealed, as you allege, how comes the 25th of December to be so universally owned for it? And what ill is there in keeping it, and even other saints days religiously?

A. Though there is a considerable agreement now-a-days, for the 25th of December as the nativity of Jesus; I must say, from the beginning it was not so. Even at the entrance of the third century, the learned Clemens of Alexandria gives three different opinions. One answers to our 16th or 17th of April; another to the 16th of May; and a third to the present received day. But Origen, who was 30 or 40 years later, in giving a list of the feasts of the church, has not one word of Christmas. See Sir Peter King on the Primitive Church, page 142.—144. Scaliger indeed, endeavours to prove from the courses of the priests appointed by David, that John Baptist was born at such a time, that the nativity of Christ, being six months after, behoved to be in September or October. But there are so many uncertain steps in this argument of Scaliger, that Christ's birth-day may still justly be reckoned concealed. The very year of his nativity is uncertain, and generally supposed to be 3 or 4 before the vulgar æra. It is noticeable how the Evangelist Luke iii. 23. as of design, uses very indeterminate words on this subject, which one needs only read to be convinced. As to your question, when and how the 25th of

December came to be so generally kept?

The most probable account of it is, that in the 4th century, when Constantine the Great's liberality had too much raised the luxury and ambition of the clergy, they, especially in chief towns, perhaps through a well meant kind of policy to get the better of the feasts of Saturn, which were kept by Pagans at that very season; agreed to keep the 25th of December as Christ's nativity, thereby to abolish the riotous Saturnalia; though this festival soon came, in many places, to be little better than the Saturnalia themselves.

G. As to the observation of holy-days of human invention, I see two reasons against it, first, it is hurtful to the religious observance of the Lord's day, which is divinely recommended, both by his resurrection and the most useful gift of tongues, being on the same day of the week. As the worship of inferior deities must derogate from the veneration due to the true God; so must, in some degree, such days or ceremonies diminish the solemnity of divine institutions. Secondly, such observances are dangerous for abuses and contentions, as those of the day of keeping Easter in the primitive church, are well known; beside the hurt to business and industry, which these idle observances occasion. True religion and the instituted means of it, are necessary to the welfare of society and of individuals; but idleness and bigotry are hurtful to all. The sacred texts in view are, Gal. iv. 9, 10, 11. Col. ii. 16.—23. Acts ii. 1.—7. and Rev. i. 10.

WITH the first day in sev'n to soul devote,
 Jesus nam'd teachers to succeed, but not
 Like Pagan kings to seek tyrannic sway;
 But, meek and humble, the pure truth display.
 He elders adds to rule, and vice restrain,
 With honest deacons God's poor to maintain.
 Those to spread virtue by example grave;
 These to pinch no one but the idle knave.
 For temples, vestments, government, expence,
 Hair and such things he left to common sense.
 Only two simple rites he did command,
 Should ever be dispens'd by pastor's hand.

C. You elsewhere hint, that several unsuitable things were introduced into the Christian church, by drawing into precedent rites or orders of the Mosaic dispensation, which were not designed to continue after the Jewish polity was abolished. Now, we would desire to have a distinct view of such Jewish orders, as may justly be observed in the Christian church, and of such as may not; with the reasons why the high-priest, priests and Levites, and all their vestments and instruments of worship, were so particularly instituted by Moses; and yet our blessed Saviour, in his more perfect religion, left so many things to common sense, as you express it?

A. To illustrate all these points fully, would require the whole learning and industry of Philo, Spencer, and Selden. But two or three general rules, may be sufficient for us, as first, That all the civil laws of the Hebrews expired when their state was dissolved, and now are only to be regarded for their equity. Secondly, That such as are expressly forbidden in the New Testament, are unlawful to Christians, as circumcision and sacrifices. But thirdly, The whole moral law, as such, is binding upon Christians; though such circumstances even in the ten commandments, as are plainly positive, or adapted to the then state of things, may justly be altered so as the spirit and circumstances of Christianity require. This may be applied to the change of the seventh

to the first day of the week for public worship; but by no means, to abolish the second command as papists do.

M. But do not you think, that the three orders you mention, as belonging to the Christian church, have been derived from the different priests and Levites, in the Old Testament? Or that these Mosaic institutions may authorise bishops, presbyters, and deacons?

G. That I can't see: though interested writers have built much of government on as bad foundations. If such schemes were solid, the Jewish high-priest might authorise a pope, at least over one nation or church. And indeed the very learned protestant Grotius, on that account or for order's sake, seems to approve of an universal bishop; though as much against implicate faith, tyranny, and persecution as we are. And the intention of the above verses, is not so much to define, as to point out the character, and usefulness of the several ecclesiastics mentioned in the New Testament; and to show the reasonableness of toleration, without impugning any civil establishment of religion that answers these purposes. The preferring of edification to castle-building, or usefulness to policy; is necessary to make Christianity thrive. See Mat. xx. 25.—27. and xxviii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 16. to the end, 1 Tim. v. 17. Acts vi. 1.—6.

C. You are too queer in putting hair among higher matters;

In one, by water's washing, is set forth
 Of Christ's pure blood and Spirit the great worth.
 This being done in name of sacred three,
 Doth signify that sinners are set free
 From bonds of vice, and giv'n to the belief
 Of Christian doctrine, thus sum'd up in brief;
 Which binds to live in purity and light,
 As he enjoins who thus has triple right.
 Faith, hope, and love how strong in church should be!
 When in the threshold the great divine Three,
 Receive ev'n infants in their loving arms
 To save through goodness, not by quirks or charms!

15

20

W. Dr. Tillotson, I remember, reckons three positive institutions in the New Testament. You in the two last lines of the preceding page, seem to reduce all Christian rituals to the two sacraments, omitting prayer in the name of Christ, John xvi. 23.

A. We are by no means opposite; because positive institutions and rites are not precisely the same. But you have more ground to blame the description of baptism now read, as omitting the controversy about infant-baptism, and whether dipping, or sprinkling be the true institution?

W. You keep by the general word, *washing*, which rightly comprehends both. And though your description be well intended, for begetting faith, love and other graces in the soul, I wish to see the effects of infant-baptism explained. Even Dr. Clarke, as I remember on the Church Catechism, teaches that baptism frees from original sin, which is dark or uncertain to me.

G. The scripture indeed joins baptism and the forgiveness of sin; but that seems to be meant of adult persons, since repentance or faith is mentioned in the same places, as Acts ii. 38, and 41. viii. 12, and 37. xiii. 24. &c. but how infants can repent or believe is inexplicable; and therefore, though infants be baptized, as Jewish children are circumcised the eighth day; yet the good effects which we can understand, can only be reaped when they come to ca-

capacity, and do observe, what is represented by the water, and what is meant by the name in which they are baptized. We allow mysteries in a just sense, but no charms.

W. Therefore you'll explain, how the Christian doctrine is summed up in the Trinity, or our being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

G. That matter appears to me thus. To such as are instructed in the Christian doctrine (which the institution Mat. xxviii. 19. supposes) the Father will take in or mean, the essential perfections of God; his power and bounty, his being the Almighty maker and kind director of the world: the Son will imply, that we being fallen and degenerate creatures, the infinite wisdom of God hath interposed for our redemption, by sending his holy child Jesus to teach, suffer, and intercede for our salvation: and the Holy Ghost will take in all the divine aids that are requisite, to make us holy or good and happy. All the glorious parts, if we may so speak, or persons of the divine nature, being employed in our recovery, show its inexpressible importance, difficulty, and extensiveness, in order to quicken us in faith, hope, and all manner of goodness, and binds us to the highest diligence and cheerfulness. For further light on this subject, you may consult the Bodies and Systems of Divinity, with Calmet's Dictionary on Baptism.

In t'other, as a feast on bread and wine,
 Is represented fellowship divine
 With heav'n and saints; binding by strongest ties,
 To mind his death who did to glory rise:
 That by the exercise of faith and love,
 Strength may be got, that shall victorious prove
 O'er sin and death and all the pow'rs of hell,
 And we in heav'n with him may ever dwell.
 Of this, it is imply'd, saints oft should eat:
 Baptized once, you need not that repeat.

W. This description of the Lord's supper is short, but I cannot say it is so distinct as Bp. Hoody's plain account, which I think you should recommend. Baptism, I know, had been used by the Jews, in admitting proselytes to their religion, and was therefore taken up by John, and confirmed by our blessed Saviour. But I have not heard whence this sacrament is derived.

A. If we must needs give it a derivation from some former rite, it most evidently took its origin from the paschal feast; as it was instituted at the very time when Jesus was celebrating the passover with his apostles. Mat. xxvi. 17, and 26. But, methinks, this ordinance has a broader ground, namely the reason and practice of mankind, who in all ages and nations, have preserved the memory of great interesting events, in some such manner as annual assemblies or festivals. But the creation and redemption of the world, are such supremely important matters, that the wisdom of God saw fit, to appoint them to be celebrated by much more frequent than annual assemblies, viz. by weekly ones. And it seems wrong, only to celebrate these events annually when we are called to do it weekly.

C. That would be a good argument against keeping Christmas and Easter, if these were to hinder the weekly observance of the Lord's day and supper: but when both are observed, it is no derogation but addition to our regard for such events. And, since the holy supper is a memorial of

Christ's death, as much as his day is of his resurrection, what may be the occasion or causes, that the one is not celebrated as often as the other; which, we read, was the case in the primitive church?

G. Some reasons against keeping Christmas and many holy-days, were given on page 39. But as to the causes of our not having the communion celebrated weekly, these may be the chief, 1. The decay of devotion and goodness among Christians now-a-days; which renders many careless or adverse to it. 2. The practice of using other wine than the land produces, as if beer was not as proper as sprinkling in baptism, in cold climates; which makes the expence be grudged. 3. In some corners where more ancient holy-days are abhorred, they join such numbers of sermons or holy-days with this sacrament, that once or twice a year is burdensome enough. In short, a worldly spirit, attachment to improper circumstances, infidelity and want of love to the Saviour, and to one another, are sad hinderances to the frequency of this duty: the observance of which is both the effect and cause of faith, love, and victory over sin and the world. I shall only add, as to the two last lines above, that baptism being the symbol of entering into the Christian church, and the supper of being preserved and nourished in goodness; the propriety of the one's being used but once by the same person, and the other very frequently, is exceeding evident.

To circumcision and the paschal lamb,
 Though these succeed, the likeness let no man
 Stretch out too far, lest thereby be brought in,
 Some superstitions of the priest of sin;
 Who, quite against the order and all sense,
 Doth only half of sacrament dispense.
 Monster of monsters! where it is confest,
 That God appointed two, man one hath left!
 And monstrous more, if monstrous more can be!
 That solemn rite for senses form'd, you see;
 By ev'ry sense to touch and rouse the heart,
 Should be explain'd all senses to subvert,
 And past remeedy the doctrine to o'erthrow,
 From which our faith of this strange feat must flow!
 And little better are these protestants,
 Who sever into shreds for trifling cants!

M. Though you are indifferent about some circumstances of the Christian sacraments, I see you can be abundantly keen about others. That baptism and the Lord's supper come into the place of circumcision and the passover is plain enough. Your caution also, against drawing the resemblance too far, is sufficiently clear as to some abuses in the primitive church; such as, their cramming the elements down the throats of infants; because in the paschal feast all circumcised clean persons were allowed to partake, *Exod. xii. 48. Ezra vi. 20, 21.* But though the Pope may found his pretended power on the high-priest's office, I do not perceive how the denying the cup to the people, bears any similitude to the passover. And you are rather too hot on that absurdity.

A. Nay, the similitude which you don't perceive, is pretty visible, when we observe that the Jews made several alterations in the passover-rites, betwixt the Mosaic institution and the time of our blessed Saviour; and these changes, the papists alledge as a justification of their altering the matter of the Lord's supper, arguing that a Pope or council has as much power as the priests under the law had. But it is to be noticed,

that the alterations about the passover were immaterial, and not unsuitable to the variation of circumstances; whereas the popish change of this sacrament is most material, even one half of the representation. Behold! a solemn council sitting in the name of Christ, and pretending to be moved by his spirit, decreeing, That notwithstanding the Lord had instituted, and the apostles given both kinds; yet by their apostolic authority they allow no wine to the people: and then think if we can easily be too hot. This is such a bold degree of impudence and profanity, that for my part I cannot find words strong enough to express its deformity. The Tale of a Tub's ridicule is weak, and poetic fury too feeble.

C. Your other lines now read, I think indeed continue the same heat, but better supported by clear and sensible arguments. They who read Dr. Tillotson, will clearly see how transubstantiation, by overthrowing the evidence of sense, destroys all rational grounds of Christian faith. And your two last verses are a well placed reproof to many protestants, for their separations on sing-songs, when they are delivered from such horribles.

Did Jesus often in his teaching strive,
 The Pharisees and Scribes from pride to drive?
 From partial glosses on the divine laws,
 And from traditions, that support the cause
 Of tyranny and vice? How guilty then!
 Must be the practice of such godless men,
 As his religion simple turn to show;
 And in their pride and nonsense further go,
 Than Jews or Pagans, persecuting all
 Who to plain bread in worship do not fall!

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60

A. This you see is a continuation of the same subject, and shows the criminal and odious nature of the use which papists make of that hard word which verse will not admit. How contrary it is to the design and spirit of our Saviour, as well as to common sense and humanity!

W. No doubt, the persecuting principles and conduct of the Romish church, or of whoever imitates her in such impious tyranny, is more vicious and destructive than mere speculative errors. See Sam. Chandler's History of Persecution. You might also have given a few rhimes on the other five sacraments which that church asserts, and shown what is right or wrong in them.

A. That I believe is of small consequence. It is but quibbling on the word sacrament to contend, whether these ought to be so called or not. Their worshipping of a wafer, and felling those who refuse it, are such horrid abuses, that their other sacraments and ceremonies are trivial matters in comparison. For instance, the additions to baptism, which I find are very ancient, viz. exorcism, chrism or anointing with oil and spittle, and signing with the cross are childish, nasty and idle; but not intolerable. *Confirmation*, may be abused, but when rationally exercised may be of great service to young people. *Marriage* is naturally an important and sacred engagement: some solemnity at its celebration is proper and decent. The same may be asserted of *orders*, or setting apart persons to the office of the

holy ministry. Even *penance*, or outward evidences of repentance are needful. Extreme *unction*, like exorcism, seems to have risen from promises or injunctions peculiar to the apostolic times, Mark xvi. 17. Jam. v. 14. but is absurd to use after the miraculous effects have so long ceased. I shall only say further, that even the best of these, if they be used as charms, or supposed *ex opere operato* to make men holy or indelibly so; if they be understood to compensate for want of inward goodness, or give safety to the vicious and unreformed; then are they so far from meriting the name of sacraments, that *sacrogorgons* is fitter for them.

M. You have certainly been too long on these, were it not, that the truth and excellence of Christianity can't appear, till false, irrational and hateful tenets and practices be removed. We observed formerly, that no external evidences by miracles or prophecies, can prove a doctrine or institution to be of God, which is in itself immoral or absurd. It is likewise plain, that particular persons can't be the better through religion, while they entertain such gross notions or superstitions as are essentially destructive of goodness. This is insinuated by the above verses, and is extremely plain from our Saviour's words, Mat. v. 20. &c. and xxiii. 13.—19. as also in Luke xi. 39. &c.

G. These are such important matters to practice and humanity, that zeal for them and against gross abuses should swallow up differences about postures and the like.

OF these enough. But now, observe the means,
Which Jesus us'd to make, or fix his friends.
Did he allure men by the flatt'ring arts,
Of speaking fine? Did he entice their hearts
By earthly pleasures? Or, to sooth in vice,
Did he amuse them with distinctions nice?
Or did he force by persecution's arms,
Of fire, or sword, or any mean alarms?
Quite the reverse. He spoke in plainest stile,
Above all human arts and flatt'ring guile.
Instead of pleasures, he foretold the loss
Of worldly goods, that his must bear the cross.

5

10

C. You seem by the title of this chapter, to do too much honour to a stupid pamphlet printed about 1741, which pretends from infant-baptism and some other topics, to show that Christianity is not founded on argument. Your transition, which at the same time, is a kind of apology for saying so much against the papists, is proper enough. And the means used by our Saviour to make profelytes seem elegantly express'd in a number of questions and answers, which you'll please to illustrate a little further.

A. Thus I attempt it. There are six superficial or undue means for inducing people to embrace any religion. 1. Rhetorical flourishes to entice the fanciful, as in the ancient Greek orators and poets. 2. Nice distinctions or subtilties to impose upon the simple, as in the arguments of ancient philosophers, and casuistry of monks, schoolmen and Jesuits of latter ages. 3. Worldly advantages to take the covetous, as in Mohamed's conquests and popish bribes. 4. Licentious pleasures to lull the voluptuous, as by popish indulgences, and Mohamed's paradise. 5. Outward pomp to please the showy, as in the pageantry of Pagan and Romish worship. And, 6. Present danger or persecution to force the timorous, as in the propagation of Mohamed's religion and violence of popery to this day. From all these bad means, our blessed Saviour was most di-

stant. Two of his fair means are in the verses now read, and some others we will find immediately.

C. You assert.—He spoke in plainest stile, but how is that consistent with his many parables?

G. To that objection I have two things to say, 1. That Christ's parables relate mostly to the character of himself and his kingdom, or such circumstances of his religion, as his hearers at that time could not bear to have more plainly express'd. 2. I say, that the main duties of religion and morality, are express'd by him exceeding plainly, without any parable; such as, what desires and affections we should cultivate by prayer. See page 38. What dispositions are most essential to true religion and happiness. See pages 67, 68. What is the real meaning of the Mosaic precepts, which Jews and others are most prone to wrest. See Mat. v. 21. &c. That his kingdom is not of this world and the like. Whoever will impartially consider these leading parts of his doctrine, and the main scope of each of his parables, I doubt not will find them very proper and plain. See Pictet and other system-writers on the perspicuity of scripture, and Calmet's Dictionary on Parable. You may also observe that the two last lines above refer to these scriptures, Mat. x. 37, 38. Luke ix. 58. and xiv. 26, 27.

Instead of yielding least indulgence sweet
 To vice in low or high, he order'd feet,
 Right-hands and eyes, ill-habits most confirm'd,
 To be forsaken, or in hell be burn'd.
 So far from aiming to exalt his grace,
 To weaken virtue, that the highest place
 He gives to suff'ring well, and combate won
 By doing best, and flying from all sin.
 So far from using violence to spread
 His mild religion, that he breaks the head
 Of fiery spirit and implicate faith,
 Both by his practice, and by what he faith.

15

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G. These lines, you will observe, are little else than a paraphrase on Mat. xviii. 8. and v. 11.—20. with Luke ix. 54, 55, 56. and John v. 39.

W. These I think scarce need a commentary. But it seems strange, how persecution has prevailed so much among Christians; since the founder of their religion, as well as common sense, is so evidently against it.

A. It is near about equally strange, that vice should prevail so much in the world, while both sense, experience and Christianity declare the evil and danger thereof so plainly. The general cause of these inconsistencies is, that mankind do not attend sufficiently to these things; but suffer themselves to be led by custom, fancy, or appetite instead of reason and religion. But a particular cause of persecution seems to have been, that since the establishment of Christianity by civil power, till the reformation from popery, no state saw the reasonableness of toleration. And even the reformers, while their zeal was strong against Romish doctrines and worship, were generally keen for uniformity and compulsion thereto. This intolerant spirit was happily humbled by Cromwel, banished by the revolution under King William, and its sophistry, I hope, for ever precluded by Mr. Locke's excellent discourse on toleration, as its odiousness is strongly represented in Mr. Chandler's History of Persecution.

M. No doubt, but these books will be

reprinted and reinforced, if the spirit of persecution shall ever attempt to enthrall Britain again. But I wish you would here sum up the evidences for the Christian religion in a few sentences.

G. That can be only a few links of the chain: as 1. Our reason and the visible frame of things shows, that there is a God, or mind of perfect wisdom, goodness and truth. 2. Our knowledge of ourselves and mankind makes us see or feel that we need mercy, instruction and assistance from God, in order to our being good and happy. 3. The Bible, as to the discoveries, laws and remedies contained in it, is worthy of the divine goodness, agreeable to our reason, and snited to our defects. 4. These discoveries being in themselves credible, are demonstrated to be from God by multitudes of miracles and prophecies, which we cannot believe perfect wisdom and goodness would do or permit, if it were not so. 5. The most ancient records which narrate these evidences, are so well confirmed by concurring testimonies, by old translations and watchfulness both of friends and enemies, that it is impossible to believe them either forged or materially vitiated. This now is the general chain; but to illustrate these evidences fully would be to repeat this whole essay: nay, it would be to repeat most of what is written by Morney, Grotius and Abbadie on the truth of the Christian religion, Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae*, Foster's, Leland's, Brown's

He who could feed some myriads of men,
 Or call from heav'n of angels legions ten;
 By arguments, not arms his kingdom rais'd,
 And blind compulsion neither us'd nor prais'd.
 He plain prohibits owning Pope on earth,
 And checks a persecuting spirit's birth.
 His only weapons were good reason's spears,
 Th' artillery he play'd were hopes and fears.
 His sword was Spirit's might, and word of God:
 With truth, and meekness pure, his feet were shod.
 And neither he, nor his apostles show'd
 The least constraint, but what in reason flow'd.

and other answers to Tindal; Butler's Analogy, Nicol's Conference with a Theist &c.

W. I understand the first of these lines refers to one of the miracles mentioned in page 30. but in the second you say Legions ten, doubtless for the rhyme; for as I remember it is twelve legions in the Bible.

G. Yes. It is in Mat. xxvi. 53. 'More than twelve legions:' but that is too verbal a criticism.

W. I shall next observe what will be allowed more material, namely, a property of your method, which is, that in adducing arguments for the Christian religion, you at the same time and in the same instances, teach very important lessons of morality, and point out the hatefulness of most pernicious vices.

A. You may thank or esteem the subject, not the rhymester for that good property. It flows from the excellence of Christianity itself. Such is the intrinsic purity and strength of this religion, that, though it is recommended by most incontestable miracles and prophecies, as evidences or seals of its divine origin; yet the highest commendation of it to every judicious mind and feeling heart, lies in the purity and benignity of its laws, the just grandeur of its sanctions, and the singular mildness of its propagation. And I have often thought, that beside the inhumanity of the thing, a greater disgrace can scarce be done to any religi-

on, than the forcing of people into it. Violence is a confession that truth is not there.

M. But I don't remember where Christ plainly prohibits owning Pope on earth, as you express it. I am sensible that the tenor of the New Testament and spirit of Christianity, is opposite to the impositions of popery: but your verse seems to imply something more particular that needs explanation.

A. You are right, as to my having in view a particular and express saying, or prohibition of our blessed Lord. It is in Mat. xxiii. 9. 'Call no man your father upon the earth.' Whence the word *Pope* in English is derived, I shall not be positive. Most probably it comes from *papa*, which both in Greek and Latin, is used to signify *father*, but is a little varied in its sound in our language, possibly because *papa* with us is too common and childish. Be this sort of criticism as it may, it is clear from that context in Mat. xxiii. chap. that *father*, *rabbi*, or *master*, means the character of the Pope, namely, one who is believed implicitly as infallible, or such veneration paid him as opposes, or destroys the honour we owe to God and to Jesus. The latter part of the verses now rehearsed, alludes to Eph. vi. 11.—17. on which you may read Gournal's Christian Armour, as one of the practical discourses you like, though he does not read so pleasantly as Tillotson.

BESIDES God's former word and wond'rous pow'rs,
 The main of arguing force that Jesus shew'rs
 Mankind to conquer fairly, was contain'd
 In awful light of future state, ordain'd
 To be made manifest by him alone, 5
 Who fully knew, and through all states had gone.
 Give we some credit to those men, who round
 This globe have steer'd, and written what they found,
 Above or in the deep? and shall we not
 Yield firmest faith to him, who ev'ry jot 10
 Of nature sees, past, present and to come,
 Who thro' death's mansions, and to heav'n has gone?

M. This you make to begin another chapter, and it is doubtless a particular excellence and intrinsic argument for Christianity; that it sets a future state in so strong a light. That endless state and the evidences for it, must deserve our highest attention and regard; yet I beg leave to make an observation on the first four lines above, viz. that they seem to me both languid, and to have some of that absurdity which the Spectator calls mixt metaphors. Thus, you begin by representing the arguments for Christianity as an army; the Old Testament I imagine as the van, miracles and prophecies as the two wings, and a future state as the main body. Immediately you change this army into rain, and shower it upon mankind, and then make these showers to flow from light which you name *awful*, I suppose you mean a cloud of light. How would such an image be drawn on canvass?

A. That is being right critical, which I truly commend. Attention to every word, image and argument is needful for attaining clear views of the subject. From the warlike images in the preceding chapter, you was naturally led to consider those lines in the same light. And I own that your imagination has marshalled this army more distinctly than was in the writer's head. I don't know if the languor you complain of lies in showers, instead of an army pouring

into a place or country; which last is an image, perhaps more strong and rapid, but not so proper to the case in hand. Men pour liquors; but showers come from heaven, and more suitably represent, both the mild frequency of our Saviour's instructions, and the slow but refreshing progress of divine light in the soul of man. See the sublime song of Moses Deut. xxxii. 2. and I think my verse will be absolved of languor. I own, that *shower* applied to light is not so common, but it seems fully as natural as beams in English or horns in Hebrew. And if showers of light be accounted above nature, it makes the fitter emblem of the works and doctrines of Jesus Christ, which are evidently so.

M. I am better pleased with the argument for a future state, taken from the character of Jesus, compared with ordinary or greatest voyagers among men, which is very plain and well urged in the latter part of these verses now recited.

G. Different tastes or capacities are pleased with different views or arguments. But for allusions or imitations in the above, you may read 2 Tim i. 10. and Rev. i. 8. and for the general argument of a future state, even Plato and Cicero say fine things; of Christian writers, Sherlock on a Future State, and Young's Night-thoughts, seem to me the best.

Read, how this mighty trav'ler us informs,
That men don't pass to brutes or other forms,
As Samian sage learn'd from the sophists bare,
Whose seed in Indies take of beasts such care;
They less regard the soul's eternal state,
Or living conduct which determines fate.

15

Ev'n reason shows immortal life to man,
Of which Night-thoughts set forth the needful plan.
Yea deathless minds do feel their being such,
Though many on that matter think not much:
To make them think, is the intention true
Of revelations all, both old and new.

20

W. This comparison to a traveller or historian, I have seen in Dr. Leechman's *Synod sermon* at Glasgow, where the most supernatural doctrines of Christianity, are beautifully confirmed by viewing them in the light of histories. As we believe many things, which we have neither seen nor can comprehend, when they are related by credible historians; it must be more unreasonable to doubt the testimony of him, whose knowledge is universal, and his veracity supreme. I think this is more natural, than to resolve all the ground of religious faith into divine testimony.

A. Perhaps this method has some natural advantage; but when matters are traced toward the bottom, they seem to land in the same thing. History or human testimony collects its credibility from many circumstances; such as, the number of witnesses, their opportunities of knowledge, their capacities, integrity and temptations for and against falsifying. Divine testimony needs none of these circumstances; but is absolutely sure by the perfection of God alone. However, excepting prophets or persons immediately inspired from heaven (the manner of whose conviction we cannot possibly describe, though it is very credible on the main) no other person receives divine testimony, but through the evidence and testimony of men. Miracles and prophecies indeed, may be named divine testimonies to

the doctrines they are adduced to prove: but then, both the doctrines and these proofs must come to us through the testimony of men, unless we have been eye-witnesses of miracles. So that incontestible human evidence, is the utmost that we ordinarily have for the ground of our Christian faith. And this is fully sufficient, as Dr. Tillotson proves in his *rule of faith* and elsewhere.

M. Well. But where do we read of our Saviour's confuting the Pythagorean transmigrations of souls? I have indeed read in *Mod. Univ. History* of some place in the East-Indies having a hospital for fleas, and hiring one to lie naked among them, for their feasting on him. But what need of alluding to such things!

G. Why, though our Saviour does not mention such fancies; yet by telling that souls after death go to Abraham's bosom, to paradise or to outer-darkness, to everlasting life, or to everlasting punishment, Luke xvi. 22. and xxiii. 43. Mat. xxv. 46. by such sayings he contradicts the old gymnosophists and present Indians. And the use of our alluding to such customs, is for engaging the attention of readers. This we observe in the last lines above, to be the design of all revelations. And who knows but this essay may travel thither to convert Indians; I am sure, it should endear our Christian faith to us, that it is clear of such trifles.

Ev'n Moses all along supposes this,
 That souls shall live in endless woe or bliss.
 But what he scarce asserts, our Saviour kind
 Sets in the strongest light to ev'ry mind.
 How that the soul, not only death survives;
 But body also rises and revives.
 What solemn trial all shall undergo;
 How good to life, and bad shall pass to woe,
 Eternal both. Though wise God may remit,
 That endless punishment, if it be fit.
 Yet men who think such fitness they perceive,
 If they see not the fitness, nor conceive
 Goodness sincere; of all men worst their chance,
 Here or hereafter, happy to advance.

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M. The law or institution of Moses, I know is represented as a school-master, or preceptor of children using present encouragements and chastisements to make the Israelites obedient; and particularly to lead them to the more spiritual institution and prospects of Christianity. But since man by natural light sees, and our souls feel, that they are made for immortality, as was sung or said in the last page, why do you here bring in Moses with an *even* and a *scarce*, as if he was darker than natural reason? Was not the translation of Enoch an early intimation of a future retribution? Was not God's declaration on which our Saviour argues Mat. xxii. 32. a good proof even of a resurrection? And were not the many sacrifices under that law, a perpetual though obscure call to mind what men deserved in a future world?

A. Please to read the whole passage again with attention, and you'll perhaps see there is little occasion for so many questions; and will discern that Moses here is only spoken of with undervalue in some sort, as compared to Christ. The first supposes, and gives hints of a future state; but the latter hath brought immortal life to so clear a light through the gospel, that every soul may understand it: even the vicious, if they attend, can scarce mistake, however they may misimprove this doctrine. The fre-

quency of temporal promises and threats in the writings of Moses, are indeed apt to lead wicked persons to overlook the hints of future recompences: but though Christians may shut their eyes, they are dunned with the sound of immortality.

W. What is your meaning in the last six verses?

G. They are meant to reprove those, who, with Dr. T. Burnet, deny eternal punishments; because God, as Abp. Tillotson justly argues in his xxxv. Sermon, may very consistently with his truth or honour as supreme legislator and judge, remit the threatened punishment: but these bold philosophers go much further, and alledge that it is inconsistent with sovereign goodness not to remit such penalties, exorbitant penalties as they imagine. This we modestly judge too high for us to assert; but with some assurance we declare, that such learned and confident gentlemen, as suppose themselves qualified to see and determine, all the ends of punishment under an universal government; but do not discern the fitness of virtue and religion, so as to cherish and practise them, are in utmost danger of paying eternally for their arrogance.

C. Such philosophers may alledge, that neither this, nor the resurrection, is to your present purpose. A. If it be for their good, there is less matter.

Eternity ! how full of awe, dread, joy !
 Awful to all, and proper to employ
 Most serious thought ; tremendous to the bad ;
 But to the lab'ring good triumphant glad !
 O boundless ocean ! where the age-long waves,
 Many as sands on shore, flow motion heaves ;
 Yet come no nearer to your final close,
 Than the first day your undulation rose.
 Soul ! think that on this ocean thou must swim ;
 If bad, in horrid bark fill'd to the brim,
 With fire and brimstone : but if good, shalt smile
 Carry'd along on God's most happy isle.

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C. Having descanted on the evidences, and different conditions of mankind, for a future state; you here, I see, consider that state as eternal, and what effects that circumstance naturally has on minds of different characters. This is plain. And you also, as I imagine, by the sound of your verses on eternity, imitate well a very slow and tedious motion, like Pope's

When Ajax strives some rocks vast weight
 to throw,

The line too labours, and the words move
 slow.

and doubtless the address to eternity as a person, and repeating it with admiration are proper enough strokes. But might you not have illustrated the incomprehensibleness of eternity, by some more strong or familiar comparisons?

A. No doubt, it might be described by infinite progressions and infinitesimal powers of numbers, which to mathematicians may raise their conceptions thereof: it might be represented as by some pious writers, That if a little bird, should once every thousand years, take away one grain of dust or sand from the earth; yet when so many millions of ages should be run, as the whole would be removed in that manner, it could be no nearer an end than it is this moment. Such learned or familiar illustrations, may be useful to some people: but the similitude of the ocean, I apprehend is more grand

and poetical.

M. But you take no notice of the distinction of eternity, as past, or to come; nor of its nature with respect to God, whose all-perfect excellencies seem wholly to exclude changes or succession.

A. As we are here treating of a future state, eternity past, or a *parte ante* as the learned speak, can have no title to be considered. Some philosophers describe the eternity of God as *punctum stans*, a standing point, which, in my opinion, they had been wiser to say plainly, They don't understand it. That eternity must be, is almost self-evident; but we have neither ideas nor words to represent it properly.

W. I like your address to the soul, though the picture of one in a bark filled with fire and brimstone, is very dreadful. And since you are not positive as to eternity of punishments, I shall give my opinion plainly for it: though I hope that in some period of futurity, even the most wicked creatures may so far reform, that their state shall be better than non-existence, their happiness still being far less than that of such as have been good in their state of trial upon earth. I must only except Judas the betrayer of our Lord, to whom the misery seems to be peculiar, 'That it had been better for him that he had never been born.' See Mark xiv. 21. with Commentators.

More bright the picture drawn in holy writ,
Where saints with God on splendid thrones shall sit;
And shine as sun or stars, ev'n in his sight
Who is the Father of all good and light.

But, dread! the portrait of damn'd wicked souls,
Thrust down with devils worse than rav'nous fowls:
Fast bound in pit all dark and bottomless,
To weep, and wail, and teeth gnash to excess;
Where fire shall burn always and worm shall gnaw,
With torments fiercer far than Harpie's claw.
Scriptures with reason thus foretell in short,
That bliss or woe's compleat of ev'ry sort.

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69

M. As eternity is by far the greatest concern of immortal creatures, I wish you had insisted on it at more length, to oppose and overcome our propensity to outward and present things.

A. Your wish is humane. And if my writing more upon eternity, would make mankind more serious and heavenly, I should labour on it while I can draw a pen. But I believe, tediousness is apt to deter many from reading religious books. And there are plenty of treatises on the four last things, which I fear are little regarded by such as call themselves polite. Even the elegant poems on the Last Day, Night-thoughts, and The Tomb are less read than idle plays and novels.

W. It is my opinion, that to think frequently, and to act constantly upon the view of a future world, is better than to read many large, subtle or laborious disquisitions about it. And though you mix some allusions to what heathen poets write, of future happiness and misery; you insist chiefly on the descriptions of holy writ, which I own, beside their high authority, are in themselves much more grand and affecting. That I approve. But as to your two last lines, they are more obscure; and I wish you would explain them, or show wherein compleat happiness and compleat misery consist.

G. That I shall do after referring to

the sacred texts whence the above descriptions are taken, viz. Mat. xxv. 30. and 34. Rev. iii. 21. and vii. 9. and 15. Mark ix. 43.—48. What are the chief ingredients of joy or sorrow flowing through the bodily senses, will fall to be explained on the resurrection in the next chapter. But now, compleat happiness of the soul, in reason must comprehend these things, viz. That all and every faculty be in a sound and good condition, and that they be all employed in the best manner, on the most proper and delightful objects. Thus more particularly, the head or *understanding* must be unbiassed and clear, and unweariedly employed in contemplating all the glorious perfections and wonderful works of God. The *memory* must be faithful, incessantly recalling to mind the truths and favours of the Almighty. The *conscience* must be pure and grateful, continually approving and applauding our *dispositions* and state. The *will* must be steadfast in chusing good, and exercised in pursuing and attaining it accordingly. And all the *affections* must be harmonious, fixed on their proper objects, and fully satisfied with them all. As on the other hand, absolute or compleat misery of soul must consist in, a dark and bewildered understanding; a dismal memory of evil; a stubborn will; fierce, jarring affections; and a conscience filled with anguish and despair. Horrible indeed! as the former is charming!

THOUGH inward joy, or grief of mind, most strong
 Be felt by mankind; yet the greatest throng
 Respect the body most: nigh all their care
 Runs out in food and raiment to prepare:
 What's seen or felt, they keenly strive to gain, 5
 And less regard ev'n future endless pain.

From this strong source, some learned men methinks,
 Teach that the sep'rate soul in sleeping sinks.
 From such regard to body our wise Lord,
 A moving spur to virtue doth afford. 10
 By his prediction, strengthen'd with his own
 Sure resurrection, he to all makes known,
 That human bodies shall be rais'd at last,
 In strength and beauty, life and quickness vast.

C. That mental pleasures and pains, are most manly and lasting can't be denied; that the bulk of mankind are more concerned about the body here, is too certain; that the doctrine of our resurrection, is an agreeable spur to virtue I own: but why you assert, that our strong attachment to the body, is the cause of so disagreeable a tenet as insensibility from death till the resurrection, I don't so well see. I call that opinion or tenet disagreeable; because I am persuaded, that the soul in a separate state, shall make many delightful curious discoveries, which she is incapable of while embodied, as how pure spirits perceive the presence and thoughts of one another, and discern material objects. Who are these learned, insensible men you speak of?

A. *Sans reproche!* but to name all the persons who have argued for that future sleep would be vain, and more so to mention their arguments at length. Socinus or his followers, who endeavour to explain away every Christian doctrine that is above our ideas or senses, are the chief sticklers for this sleeping state. They draw their arguments, not only from the alledged inconceivableness of activity in the soul without bodily organs, but also from figurative expressions in scripture, where the death of saints is called falling asleep, or sleeping in

Jesus. See 1 Thess. iv. 14. 1 Cor. xi. 30. and xv. 51. with Eccl. ix. 10. Even the ingenious author of the Theory of the Earth goes into this opinion in his book de Statu Mortuorum &c. which shows that even the most speculative gentlemen are strongly attached to the body and its senses, else such a one as Burnet, could not have missed to understand these scriptures as figurative, denoting only the freedom of saints from pain and trouble, but by no means deprived of knowledge, activity and joy: especially, since the apostle opposes being in the body, and being with the Lord; and desired to be dissolved that he might be with Christ, as far better than this embodied state, which that sleep surely is not. 2 Cor. v. 6, and 8. and Phil. i. 23.

M. Well. Hitherto is an introduction to engage our attention to the resurrection of the body, as a matter of great utility for moving us to purity and all virtue. But in the last-read four lines, you mention, I think, too briefly the evidences of that desirable event. May you not set them in a clearer light?

G. We have not room here. But you will find it clearly done by Ditton on the Resurrection of Christ, and St. Paul 1 Cor. xv. chap. throughout.

The qualities of bad are darkly shewn:
 But good like angels, spirits, or his own
 Most glorious body, which by far excells
 Our senses here, in eyes, ears, tongues and smells.

Can you who now delight in various shows,
 Or any pleasure which through body flows,
 Neglect these virtues that will you prepare,
 To shine in bodies of a higher sphere?
 As far above this clay and organs gross,
 As Jesus' throne is far above his cross.

A. As at the conclusion of last chapter, we explained a little wherein the greatest happiness and misery of soul must be supposed to consist, so this is the place to consider the same matter with respect to the body.

W. Methinks I can supply that, by reflecting on what was said on the other, and viewing the state and exercises of the body and senses much in the same way, viz. That all of these be in a sound and good condition, and employed on the most proper objects, in the most agreeable manner; particularly, that the eye-sight be so strong and clear, as unweariedly to behold the grand and beautiful material works of God: that the ear be quick and harmonious, and often employed in hearing the most excellent discourses, or ravishing heavenly music: that even the less noble senses, which are chiefly useful now to make us discern and relish proper aliments, be so refined and lively, as to receive the purest delight from the sweetness of the trees of life and paradise of God, or whatever shall be the means of supporting an immortal body. And lastly, feeling such perfect health, vigour and activity, with such employment of them through the whole body, as to give more strong delight in every part, than we are now capable of enjoying in any one. But you must take up the theme: for I am like to bewilder myself in the thoughts of such felicity.

A. No wonder, when we consider what

an apostle says 1 Cor. ii. 9. If indeed our bodies after the resurrection, were to have the same constitution and uses as here, it would be more easy to conceive wherein the completion of that sort of happiness must consist. But since the bodies of saints hereafter, are declared to be *spiritual*, like the angels or Christ's glorious body; it is impossible for us now to be very particular, as to the ingredients of which the felicity of glorified bodies shall consist. Dr. T. Burnet, in the book before referred to, seems to be against all organs in resurrection-bodies, supposing the whole shall be a sort of flame or light, which is hard to conceive.

M. As I remember, that author allows the glorified body will have all our present senses in higher perfection, and probably others that we now have no notion of, which I also expect.

G. And I suppose you will not think the address in the last six verses amiss; as we are all given, more or less, to value bodily pleasures, and appearances in this low scene, more than we ought. How inconsistent is it in those who believe a resurrection, and eternal state of the body as revealed in scripture, to be so anxious for the transient health, beauty or figure in this life; and to neglect the graces and virtues of piety, modesty, truth, and goodness, which adorn the whole person in the eyes of best judges here, and are necessary for eternal glory?

Like light to range through the creation wide,
 And ev'ry work to view on ev'ry side.
 In ceaseless health, and in eternal youth;
 To be all eye, all ear, all life and mouth,
 To see and hear and praise the father high,
 And Son with Spirit face to face descry.
 Who would these happinesses grand insure?
 Must now live holy, keep their bodies pure,
 Shun actions cruel, impious and unchast,
 Else they must sink in dreadful pit at last;
 From whence no masses, nor priest-craft can save,
 Nor bold and barren faith apt to deceive.

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W. You begin this almost in the words of our friend Dr. Burnet; and give another hint whence the happiness of saints in glorified bodies will proceed, viz. their unconfined motion, and vision usually called beatific.

A. I by no means follow any one doctor, or am opinionative as to the particulars of that felicity; but only allude to some of the sublime expressions of scripture, of that author, of Addison's Cato, of Dr. Watt's Sermons, and Sir Isaac Newton's Scholium at the end of his Optics. And as we have before taken a short view, of future happiness as to soul and body separately, I would here glance at their united felicity, and contrast it with the misery of future punishment. Thus, supposing all the faculties and powers of mind and body, in the highest strength, order and purity, the compleat happiness of the righteous will consist in the most agreeable place, company, exercise and duration. 1. The place of habitation for glorified saints, is a most splendid and convenient city, with gardens, fountains, and every celestial ornament, Rev. xxi. 10.—27. Whereas the abode of the wicked is represented, as a most dismal pit or dark and hideous prison. 2. The society of saints above, will be all the divine persons, all the beneficent angels, all the holy and charitable men that have been in the world, from Adam to the last day. See Heb. xii. 22.—24.

While the company of reprobates shall be nothing but monstrous cruel devils, fierce ugly men, and their own tearing passions.

3. The exercise and employment of friends of God in heaven, will be, to survey the works of creation, providence and redemption; to see God and their Saviour as he is, to love, to adore, and to praise him with joy unspeakable; to hold most delightful converse with condescending angels, and most unreserved friendship with all the sons of light: whereas the children of Belial in hell, can have no other employment, but to consider their past lives with regret, their Maker with trembling, and themselves with horrible shame and dismay; to bite and be bitten among scorpions, worms or devils, and scorched as with the most piercing flames. These are some of the scriptural images of the perdition of ungodly men. But, 4. What must inexpressibly enhance the joy of the glorious situation, society and entertainments of saints, is this circumstance or property, that they are all eternal; so far from decaying or changing to the worse, that they will be brightening, enlarging and improving for ever and ever. This is happiness indeed! As to a parallel of misery, may every one avoid the danger of it, by flying from sin to true Christianity!

C. Your caution, in the two last verses, against trusting to superstitious rites, or presumptuous dead faith, is good and necessary.

BEHOLD the manner of the grand affize !
 Which Christ foretells ; how with a thief's surprise,
 That awful day will come ! The heav'ns and earth
 Shall be convuls'd in more than second birth !
 The world in flames ! when he the judge appears,
 Cloathed in majesty which nature fears ;
 With hosts of angels to call up the dead,
 By archangelic voice and trumpet dread !
 When all of ev'ry age and state must come,
 To stand their trial and receive their doom. 10
 Like two vast flocks collected on each hand
 They hear their thoughts, words, acts intirely scann'd :
 Detected ev'ry thing by double book,
 Which God and conscience of their conduct took !

W. When you have described the eternal state both of good and bad men, there appears little occasion for a chapter on the final judgment. Eternity contains every motive, and other circumstances disappear in its view. Besides, I don't think that in this you follow the order of nature, where judgment must go before eternity. Nor do you mention death, which is prior to both.

A. I would much rather chuse to illustrate the matter, than to vindicate the form or order of this essay ; yet we shall neglect no visible objection that we have room to discuss. First then, I grant the all-containing nature of eternity in itself, and yet maintain that other motives to duty are by no means needless. Such plainly is our corruption or weakness here, that all arguments and views are scarce sufficient to move us to what is right. Eternal recompences to attentive and cool reason, are indeed the highest and most powerful motives ; but to creatures of our make, who naturally regard public honour and shame very sensibly, such a scriptural delineation of the great affize as is here given, with the circumstances of surprise, majesty, universality and impartial justice cannot be useless ; but is wisely calculated to have the most powerful influence on the hearts and lives

of mankind.

C. You have said enough of the nature and usefulness of the revelation of a judgment to come, especially as Mr. Sherlock, who writes so well on death, explains and enforces this subject so fully.

G. As this is a matter of pure revelation, I shall refer to the principal texts, in the order they are glanced at above, Mat. xxiv. 42.—44. 2 Pet. iii. 10.—12. 1 Theff. iv. 16. Mat. xxv. 31.—33. and Rev. xx. 12, 13. But though death is both naturally prior to judgment, and the consideration thereof very useful for exciting us to good practices ; yet it falls not to be insisted on here with the resurrection and manner of the last judgment : because it is not, like these, peculiar to Christian revelation ; but, as a natural source of morality, is reserved for its place in another book or essay.

W. But you still neglect the order of time in that way of doing.

A. In systematic prose-writing, that might be blameable ; but in any sort of poetry, such order is often neither necessary, nor proper. The rhimester even in didactic, which is the simplest kind of poetry, may lawfully rush into the midst of his subject, and bring in the material events or arguments, as the spirit of instruction leads him.

A third book also where are writ the names,
Of faints absolv'd and freed from penal flames.

"Till this be read, the just may justly fear :

But then, with honour great, and joy, they'll hear,

" Come bless'd of God ! enter your endless reign,

" Because ye kindly helped me or mine."

26

But when the sentence of the wicked sounds,

" Depart, ye cursed ! to infernal grounds ;

" For ye neglected ev'ry office kind :

" And now, with devils must for ever grind !"

Who can express the dread ! which prays the huge

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Mountains, or rocks to whelm them from the judge !

M. These three books are doubtless poetical, as well as scriptural. I easily understand what is meant by the two former, to wit, the divine knowledge or remembrance, and the testimony of our own consciences ; but as to the third, I wish you would explain it more distinctly.

A. It seems to be this third book, which in Rev. iii. 5. and xiii. 8. xx. 12. and xxi. 27. is named the book of life, and Lamb's book of life ; and in Psal. lxix. 28. is called The book of the righteous. It may be understood as a great roll, in which are written the names of all, who are in the divine mercy, qualified for eternal life ; at the same time containing the joyful sentence, which will then be pronounced in their favour. As the New Testament plainly declares, That Jesus in his glorious body shall be judge, I see no absurdity in our understanding this book literally, though the other two be somewhat figurative. Or, if this be thought too low, we may by this book or roll understand, the determination or sentence of the great Judge, made known to men by himself or the ministry of angels.

W. I see indeed, that the matter of the sentence to be pronounced both on good and bad men, which you express nearly in words of scripture, is the most effectual that can well be imagined, for exciting mankind to mercy and beneficence, and for restraining them from inhumanity : but I don't see that

it gives so plain or strong a sanction to faith and devotion.

G. These in their genuine nature are inseparably joined, so that mentioning one of them is in a manner naming both. And you'll observe, that this description of the last judgment in Mat. xxv. is the application of two parables, instructive indeed to all mankind, but especially suited to the Jews whom he was then teaching. Our blessed Saviour therefore, when speaking of this argument to such persons, most wisely and properly, mentions those parts of the awful sentence which are most adapted to awaken them ; though there is little doubt, but persons of different bad characters, shall have sentence denounced against them suited to their different vices. True faith and devotion infallibly render their possessors kind and beneficent, like the object of their belief and worship : but if any be kind and merciful, and yet reject the Christian faith and worship when tendered to them, (which is scarce credible) without doubt they shall be condemned for their impiety

C. I see well, that the Pharasaic character of bigotry and superstition, not only opposes true faith and devotion ; but the hypocrisy therewith connected, is destructive of all humane offices. And the two last of your awakening verses, I perceive are taken from Rev. vi. 16, 17.

How wise the painting of this solemn scene;
 For spur to good, and evil to restrain?
 By hopes and fears the greatest and the best
 Our headstrong passions to quell and resist.
 By shame and honour, public and most strong,
 That move both princes and the vulgar throng;
 To work in virtue and each godly deed,
 By which all judg'd we thrice five times do read.
 And on the whole of future state and place,
 Society, employment, and the race
 Of endless durance, to the pure and bad,
 Can equal motives possibly be had?

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W. In this conclusion, and improvement as preachers call it, of final judgment and eternity, I see you take notice how well these arguments, and the scriptural painting of them, is adapted to work on mankind of every condition, to move them by the strongest handles of hope and fear, honour and shame. That seems all very plain and proper; but I think this line is darker,

By which all judg'd we thrice five times do read.

would it not have been more clear and useful, to have represented who is to be the judge? Christ: who are to be judged? All men, and also angels: What is to be the rule of judgment? The laws of God and our Saviour: What shall be the issue or consequence of that judgment? Eternal rewards and unutterable punishments suited to the dispositions and works of all.

G. These questions and answers are to be found in almost every catechism or explication thereof, and may be seen more fully and rationally in *Sherlock on Judgment*. And as to our reading fifteen times, that men shall be judged by, or according to their works; look to these scriptures, Job xxxiv. 10. or 11. Psa. lxii. 10. Prov. xxiv. 12. Jer. xxxii. 19. Ezek. vii. 27. Mat. xvi. 27. Rom. ii. 6. 1 Cor. iii. 8. 2 Cor. v. 10. Eph. vi. 8. Col. iii. 25. 1 Pet. i. 17. Rev. xx. 12. again 13. and xxii. 12. and you will understand the meaning. Nor do I believe

we can find any point of doctrine, so often and so plainly inculcated in holy writ, scattered through every part and thickening toward the end.

M. I perceive it. But your four concluding lines, particularly your question in the last, may also need some explanation.

A. These verses sum up the whole arguments drawn from futurity and the issue of the last judgment, which may be enlarged thus. 1. The state of the righteous in soul and body most glorious, free from all evil, and like to blessed angels, nay to God and their redeemer: but the wicked in a most wretched state, shameful and diabolical. 2. The place of saints, a paradise for delights, the grandest city for accommodations, heaven the seat of God: but to sinners hell, a pit dark, bottomless, horrible! 3. To the good, society with all wise and happy beings, with saints, angels, the Mediator, and Father of all: but to bad, devils, and every odious, shocking creature! 4. The pure, to be employed in conversing with all created beauty, and seeing, adoring the blissful source of all: but the unholy, to weep and wail in pains unutterable, the howling of despair! 5. All these to be raised to their highest possibility by eternal duration. The good without fear, and the bad without hope;

Can such grand motives possibly be had!

TWO other means peculiar Jesus grants,
 To lead and strengthen us in way of faints;
 His pure example and his Spirit good:
 One plain and simple, one less understood;
 Important both, to purify the soul,
 Good habits to enforce, and bad controul.

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Behold! and see, how holy one of God,
 As he commanded, so he closely trod
 The paths of goodness, uniform and pure,
 From his first youth unto his dying hour.
 How early did he ply his Father's work,
 Going to place of worship far as York:
 Teaching, if distant, that we should not grudge,
 But grateful use it, if near church we lodge.

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M. When you have named this chapter, *Christ's Example*, why don't you treat of that subject alone? In the first six lines you speak of two peculiar advantages of Christianity, but only one of these is spoken of in the rest. What is the reason of this irregularity?

A. We versifiers pretend a kind of inspiration, which is sometimes all the reason we can give for this or the other method or expression; and yet this sort of inspiration, on a cool revival, must have some solid reason to show, otherwise it ought to be changed. The particular reason for the conjunction you complain of, is, to keep up the grandeur of the arguments for Christianity, or rather of Christian means and motives to goodness. That of a future eternal state, in the preceding chapter, is so high and strong, that any one of these by itself would sink in a disagreeable manner: but when they are thus joined, they somehow support the weight and grandeur of the subject, while at the same time our religion condescends to the inferior principles of imitation, and aid of another.

C. Whatever be in that, I see you are still careful to express the practical use of all means or arguments. But I'm afraid we may be thought to imitate the Editor of Pa-

mela too much, in commending our own performance.

G. Nay, I'll mention an excellence of that author's works, which he or his first friends forgot, namely, his giving many instructive patterns of female conduct both good and bad, which our blessed Lord had no opportunity to exemplify. And if we be faulty in praising our own methods, we have this advantage of that valuable author, that we do not prefix such commendations to the front of our work; but only insert them in an obscure place to fill up a page.

W. You have little need of that, on such large and useful subjects as are here presented to us: particularly, the example of woman's feed, as perfectly agreeable to his precepts, all of a piece and constant from first to last. But in mentioning his early piety (which is highly important for young persons of both sexes to imitate) you use a comparison, I think too vulgar and undetermined,

Going to place of worship far as York: if you mean from London or Edinburgh to York, it is much farther than from Nazareth to Jerusalem; if from Durham or Newark, it is not so far.

A. It can only mean a long way in general. But see and learn Luke ii. 41, - 51.

To earthly parents long he did submit, -
 Though wiser far; us teaching that 'tis fit,
 By honour and obedience, we give joy
 To them who for our good themselves employ.

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In public teaching see, how bright he shines!
 How great and artless! strong in checking crimes.
 From obvious nature divine things h' explains;
 From seeds and flow'rs, trees, jewels, rocks and rains,
 He men and manners, right and wrong declares,
 Shews what is safe, and what to woe in snares.
 Of's teaching wise he level'd many parts,
 Against traditions, and perverting arts
 Of Pharisees and Scribes, who turn'd God's laws,
 By worldly glosses to indulge their flaws:
 So justifies his Doctor good of Kent
 Threshing dire pop'ry who such labour spent.

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W. I approve your order here, which from the example of divine worship, proceeds to that of obedience or subjection to parents. Both these are exuberant sources of other duties, as well as most reasonable and lovely in themselves. As the one is comprehensive of the first table of the law, so is the other of the second; and they mutually support one another. Nor is the solution of a difficulty, as to children when grown up, and become wiser than their parents, improper; namely, that though such absolute subjection as in childhood be not then due; yet honour and such conduct as may give them comfort, is not only reasonable toward parents and all beneficent superiors, in the most advanced state of children, but peculiarly authorised by the pattern of our Lord. From this you come to his example in teaching; and I wish you had both given us a little of your philosophy, why example has so great influence, and delineated that of our Saviour as to the private duties of every station more fully.

A. As to your *desiderata*, they are much too large subjects for this place. The first, of imitative dispositions and the power of example, will come in more properly in an-

other book. It flows from our sociable frame, and is wisely ordered for our more easy and effectual improvement than by precept only, though like other most useful things, it be liable to worst abuse in following bad examples. For the other part of your wish, yourself observed justly that right dispositions and behaviour toward God and parents, is comprehensive of all other duties. This made it less necessary that our Saviour's conduct in private life should be fully recorded. So from his twelfth year to his thirtieth, the Evangelists are almost silent; but thence pretty full on his public ministry.

M. We see that his public teaching, which you insist on at so much length, is not only most instructive to succeeding teachers, but to all Christians; though it consists mostly of parables and similitudes, or in arguing against and confuting the roguery of Scribes and Pharisees. It was suited to his time. And Dr. Tillotson well deserves your applause for his frequent arguings against popery in his days.

G. The parables above referred to, see in Mat. xiii. chap. vi. 28, 29. iii. 10. vii. 6, 14.—27. See Bourn's Discourses.

Of his great doctrines soon the muse will say:
 But now rehearse his principles she may.
 To honour God, and good of men promote,
 Were his sole aims. From these he swerved not,
 To worldly grandeur, pleasure, or renown;
 But doing good prefer'd before a crown.
 Learn of him meekness and a lowly mind,
 Stedfast to truth, though 'gainst him were combin'd,
 Herod and Pilate with the Jewish crew:
 Learn patience under suff'rings great and new,
 How wonderful his patience and good-will,
 Who prays for pardon to those who him kill!
 His perfect virtues in our mortal frame,
 Encourage men's endeavouring the same:
 As by his living in a humble state,
 His pattern reaches both to small and great,
 We all may see the fatal influence,
 Of bad examples ev'n on men of sense;
 Of good precedents equal good should come,
 Most of the greatest, humblest, best in one.

M. Here you give us large measure. Having before described the outward exemplary conduct of Christ, you now descant on his principles or inward character last, which I think should rather have been first.

A. I don't contend about the order of first or last; but think it more natural to begin at outward behaviour, as plainest; and then to rise to inward dispositions or principles, which are less plain but more important. And to give the stronger view of these, they are express'd both positively and negatively. Nor will you disapprove our call to learn truth, meekness and patience from him, who gave such amiable instances of them all.

M. That is good. But may you not give some account, wherein our Saviour's actions are imitable by us, and wherein not? As it is very clear, that some parts of his conduct neither can, nor ought to be imitated by us.

A. That is partly the reason, why these verses say more of his dispositions than of

his outward actions; because his mental character, excepting infinite knowledge, is all imitable by us, and most engaging for our imitation. His condescension and love, his zeal for truth and against hypocrisy; in a word, all his pious and humane dispositions provoke our esteem, and excite our imitation. But, as to his actions, though all holy and good, we cannot and may not pretend to follow him in those which he did, either as a worker of miracles, as an extraordinary teacher, or as the divine Mediator.

W. That may also pass; but, that his low condition in life, should make it reach to the great seems hyperbolical.

G. These expressions can only mean, that our Saviour's living so makes his example most extensively useful, as the far greatest part of mankind are in deprest situations. And his chusing a low or humble state, is exceedingly instructive to the high upon earth, that they may not think true greatness lies in power, riches, or splendor, but in patiently doing good.

NOR less the influence of his Spirit mild;
 Though how he works, man knows but as a child.
 As wind blows whence we know not ev'ry morn,
 So is each person of the Spirit born.
 But this we know, that he who made the soul,
 Has access to inform it or controul.
 That all his workings must consistent be,
 With nature made accountable and free.
 Partic'lar Providence and Spirit's aid,
 Who trust, of chance and weakness are n't afraid.
 Ev'n Pagan wife man said, No one was great
 Without divine impulse, he names't afflate.
 We too may say, No man is great and meek,
 Without this Sp'rit, enthusiasm in Greek.

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W. As you refer often to texts of scripture, I shall here refer to a set of sermons, where the operations of the divine Spirit, and the regards which we owe to him, are best represented that I have seen. These are Evans on the Christian Temper, Sermon. xiii.—xviii. And though your lines above appear pretty simple and rational, yet they contain arguments, both for the probability and manner of this Spirit's operations, that are new to me. These I wish you would explain, particularly as to the afflates and enthusiasm that you mention, but which, I imagine, might as well have been omitted.

A. I am very sensible of the difficulty of setting this matter of the gracious operations of the Spirit, in a just and proper light. But our fourteen lines now read, may be illustrated more easily by the following observations, viz. that we have 1. The introduction, or transition from our Saviour's example to his Spirit, declaring that the influence of this, is at least equally powerful with that which was insisted on before. 2. We have an assertion of our natural ignorance of the manner of the Spirit's operation, taken from John's Gospel iii. 8. but 3. That we know, that Almighty God has access to the soul, and that his operations of every kind must be suited to, or consistent with our free-agency and accountable-

ness. 4. We have a hint of the usefulness of faith in these operations or assistances, (with which particular Providence is joined) namely, for giving courage or strength to the weak. 5. An argument for the Spirit's influence, and necessity thereof for rendering men eminently good, taken from Seneca's expression, of which our eleventh and twelfth lines are a literal translation. And lastly, we have a sort of confirmation from the Greek word, which signifies the inhabiting of the Deity; though in most modern languages it is generally meant of, a frantic or false pretence to heavenly direction or influence.

C. I see you intend to guard against the modern or bad notion of enthusiasm, by ascribing meekness as well as great and heroic actions to its influence. But yet, I imagine, that arguments fetched from a single Pagan, and a criticism on an old word, are too far drawn and feeble to support such a doctrine.

G. These can only show that such a notion is not contrary to the natural ideas of mankind, while its proof flows purely from supernatural revelation. Better to distinguish real from imaginary, will be further shown immediately. On this see Greek Lexicons, and Lord Shaftesbury on enthusiasm.

This Spirit, Jesus promis'd to comfort,
 Instruct and sanctify in kindest sort,
 His follow'rs good; and that he should be giv'n
 To all who ask him, to convince of sin,
 To form their hearts with love and righteousness,
 And them support in times of deep distress.
 He did this by great wonders in the days
 Of apostolic pow'r; and dwells always
 In hearts of just, and in their bodies too,
 To give them joy, pure truth, and vigour new.

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Mark! that this very promise when believ'd,
 Must greatly fortify a spirit griev'd.
 Who is such coward, that he would not stand,
 And stoutly fight, who knows sure help at hand?
 Who is so thankless, as not strive t' excell,
 Knowing this Spirit deigns in him to dwell?

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M. In this, you justly lay the weight of the argument for the reality of the divine Spirit's operations in the soul of man, upon the positive declarations and promises of Christ himself; as, indeed, had this been knowable, to any degree of certainty, by the light of nature, it could not be ranked among the means of goodness peculiar to Christianity.

A. That is plain enough. And you'll observe further, that the first six of these verses, is a pure collection of scripture expressions, taken from John xiv. 16, 17. and 27. and xvi. 7.—14. Luke xi. 13. And that this may not be confined to the days of the apostles and miracles, as in Acts xvi. 25. &c. Our next four verses allude also to Mat. xxviii. 20. 1 Cor. iii. 16. and vi. 19. where we are assured, that Christ by his Spirit shall assist his servants, and be in his people to the end of the world.

W. In the last six lines of what was now read, I see you use two arguments to prove the importance and usefulness of these promises, introduced by a call to attention, *Mark!* but still I fear there is some danger of such promises being abused to presumption or neglect of means,

A. Undoubtedly, every good thing is liable to abuse. But as meekness is one mark of the Holy Spirit's operations, humility and diligence are others, to distinguish them from bad enthusiasm or delusions.

C. Well. I find we shall come to more clearness by degrees. But there is a joy in the Holy Ghost mentioned Rom. xiv. 17. How shall we distinguish that from other joys?

G. I take it thus. The kingdom of God there, is meant of the happy fruits of religion in the soul. And there are three parts of felicity rising one above another, viz. righteousness, or conscious integrity for the present, peace with God in conscience for the past, and joy in the Holy Spirit for the future, that is, because he is promised, given, and will be in us to assist and keep us safe for the time to come. How joyful a thought is this, That he who hath begun a good work in us, will carry it on till the day of Christ! Phil. i. 6. And the arguments in the last four lines are, that assurance of help strengthens, and gratitude enlivens us to excell.

This Sp'rit of Christ not only witness bears,
 Along with ours to drive away bad fears;
 But also strengthens us by his wise pow'r,
 To know, pray, watch and conquer ev'ry hour.
 But, O beware! lest you this faith abuse,
 By vain presumption, or neglect to use
 Your highest nat'ral pow'rs with chearful force.
 Beware! and grieve not, nor cause sad divorce
 'Twixt heav'nly aid and you. For 'tis most plain,
 That all the actings of the Sp'rit supreme,
 As of inferior, good or bad, are told,
 To make us watchful, firm, and humbly bold;
 That we, improving the protection sure
 Of good, may hate, fly and resist th' impure.

35

40

C. You begin this with another expression of scripture that surely needs explanation. I can't say that I have a distinct idea of such witnessing, and am afraid that many people build wrong enthusiastic notions on it.

A. Surely you would not use other than expressions of scripture, in describing a matter which is only known by revelation of that scripture. What was before quoted from the words of our Saviour, John iii. 8. shows that we can't precisely explain the manner, of the divine Spirit's either working or witnessing in or with ours. Nor is there any wonder it should be so, since we do not clearly understand, how our own spirit works upon the affections of our hearts, or even upon our bodies in their growth, muscular motion and the like. In these, it is only the effects, and some general rules and uses, that we can pretend to understand. There are no less than nine kinds or parts of the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Gal. v. 22, 23. Our having these and walking in them, are the best scriptural evidences of our being possessed of, and led by the Spirit of God. And on the other hand, there are seventeen opposite kinds of works in the 19th and 20th verses of the same chap. any of which, whoever indulges or has predominant in him, is subject to a very dangerous enthusiasm if he thinks himself acted by the Spirit of Christ.

M. By what is said you have not at all made it plain, how the testimony of the Spirit, and of our own consciences differ, or are distinguished. Or, whether by the witnessing of the Spirit, you mean only the declaration of the characters of men in scripture dictated by the divine Spirit, or some special operation on our souls.

G. So far as I have observed of late writers in divinity of the rational sort, they seem, through fear of being mystical or enthusiastic, as I suppose, to take witnessing of the Spirit only for the word of God, and our spirits for conscience judging, or declaring to us accordingly: but I really think somewhat more is meant by the divine Spirit's bearing witness, which I know not if I shall express intelligibly when I say, That as strong or high animal spirits in one, give quick thoughts, memory and confidence, so the divine Spirit enlarges the judgment and views of one's character to himself, and enables him to see clearly the graces and virtues he is possessed of, not to render him presumptuous or mad, as much animal or artificial spirits do; but to make him humble, watchful, and courageous in doing good and resisting evil. See Rom. viii. 16. &c. with best Commentators, and particularly Evans's Sermons before cited. And Owen on the Spirit if you please.

ATTEND and see, what were the precepts great
Which Jesus taught, and urg'd by mighty state,
Of miracles, predictions, seventh-day's rest,
Pastors, and sacraments, and wishes best;
Eternal life, and resurrection sure,
Solemn account, example, Spirit pure?

Expect you laws or doctrines grand and new?
This partly is and partly is not true.
Chief happiness of man he new defines,
Counter the fond opinion of those times;
As not consisting in rich indolence,
In worldly mirth, or pow'ful self-defence;
Nor in keen passions, tho' their object gain'd,
Or gold, fame, splendor with a conscience stain'd.

W. I have often read and heard from such as you call rational divines, of a distinction, which seems to be of considerable moment, between the end and means of religion. I suppose this is what you have an eye to, in what was now read. The several subjects of the preceding chapters, which you recapitulate so fully, being the means; and the laws of Christ, or rather our obedience to these laws, being considered as the end of all. But yet I think there is some inconsistency in making laws the end, and some of these particulars, especially eternal life, the means to such an end. I would desire to see that distinction cleared.

A. That may best be done by another distinction both of means and ends, viz. as relating either to persons, or to discoveries and institutions. The good of persons is the end of all doctrines and laws. But whatever is called a subordinate end, is at the same time a mean toward a higher end. The supreme end of all is the most extensive good of creatures, which is inseparably joined, or the same thing with the glory of God. The end immediately subordinate to this, and a necessary means of it, is the obedience of creatures to the divine laws. These laws need means to enforce them; such as, the arguments from miracles and prophecies to engage our belief of their divine authority;

sabbaths, pastors, prayers and sacraments to excite us to lay them seriously to heart; Christ's example and Spirit to lead and encourage us to obedience; and lastly, the resurrection, final judgment and eternal state, or rather the publications of these, are strong means to move us to regularity by our hopes and our fears. So that though eternal life, as the endless happiness of persons, be a high or supreme end; yet the revelation of that felicity, is justly ranked among means of religion.

M. I remember some practical rules, as to these means and ends; namely, that we must neither neglect the means of religion, nor rest in them as the end. 2. That we should value these means severally according to their influence, or service toward the great end. 3. That in competitions, ends are to be preferred to means. 4. That all means and subordinate ends, are to be used and pursued in order to the ultimate end. 5. That this sovereign end is habitually to be kept in view.

A. That is the sum indeed. And you cannot miss to observe, that the latter part of the verses above, is intended to introduce a paraphrase on the beatitudes, by rejecting the common worldly notions which oppose these divine maxims of our Saviour.

W. Very plain. You'll read more,

As he eternal life brought to clear light ;
 In God and it, he happiness lays right :
 On what is needful, or an useful mean,
 To qualify us best for joys of heav'n.

" In being humble, temper'd for poor state ;

" Such swift will learn his rule and goodness great.

" Happy are they who sin and trouble mourn ;

" It to their virtuous comfort soon shall turn.

" Blest are the mild and meek dispassionate ;

" Ev'n on the earth they'll likely hold good state.

" Happy are they who pant for righteousness ;

" Their honest labours shall have good success.

" Blessed are they who mercy warm maintain ;

" They mercy shall from God and man obtain.

M. You, having before rejected the low principles of action that prevail so much in the world, here further introduce your paraphrase on our Saviour's words, by shewing how justly these maxims are founded on his great doctrines of God and eternal life. I see likewise, that these maxims may well be named laws as well as beatitudes, as each of them contains both an important duty and a powerful argument of double blessedness. But I wish you would give an account of the order and connexion of these beatitudes, as you did on the ten commandments and Lord's prayer.

A. I do not indeed perceive so much of a chain, or systematic order, in this divine passage, as in the other two you mentioned. But Mr. Blair, who published a good set of discourses on the whole sermon on the mount, alleges with much probability, that these several maxims are especially levelled against so many prejudices of the Jews, as to the nature of the Messiah's kingdom. Whatever may be in this, there is evidently a connection and suitableness, between every disposition commended and the kind of happiness thereto annexed. Thus, in the first, Mat. v. 3. An unambitious or humble spirit, is a leading qualification for teachableness, obedience, and felicity in all men, tho' it likely had a primary view to oppose the notion of a temporal kingdom and riches

under the Messiah, among the Jews. The like may be said of the second paradox, as to the gay of mankind, and selfish Jews. The third is taken from Psal. xxxvii. 11. As indeed the whole breathes much of the Spirit of David and Solomon, in their sublime and useful, but unconnected sayings.

C. You express the disposition in the fourth beatitude, by *panting* instead of hunger and thirst, both for rhyme, I suppose, and to represent earnestness more emphatically. To pant is to struggle, as it were, for breath, which we need more constantly than even meat and drink. But there is another thing that I see little or no reason for, viz. your varying the word blessed into happy, or contracting it into blest.

A. I own the reason of that is little: but being some little, it ought not to be overlooked. It may serve both to engage attention, and make readers better take the sense of these divine maxims. Or even an *euphonic* advantage should not be despised; though I am far from the niceness which Mr. Pope proposes in one of his letters, I think to Mr. Walsh.

W. Euphonic I suppose is a Greek word like enthusiastic, but of a better sound. And the fifth beatitude is scarce a paradox at all, 'Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.' I think it well expressed in your two last lines.

15

20

25

- “ Happy are they whose hearts are pure and clean ;
 “ God shall by them be now and ever seen.
 “ Bless’d are the men who peace and love promote ;
 “ The honour of God’s sons shall be their lot.
 “ Happy are they who suffer in Christ’s cause ;
 “ Great their reward in heav’n by his good laws.”

30

Hence, brethren, learn in God and heav’n to seek,
 Your lasting happiness ; and thither creep,
 Through the low gate of humble, patient mind ;
 The only way sure good and bliss to find.

35

M. Having made some observations on five of the beatitudes, the three now read scarce need explication, or if any want a large illustration, they will find it in Blair’s or Blackhall’s Sermons on Mat. v. 3.—12. I would have you here explain the difference ’twixt principles, motives and ends in religion. You did it as to means and ends before ; but *principles* I thought you mentioned in too undetermined a way.

A. Very true ! That was in the beginning of our last chapter, page 61. And it is proper now to supply that defect. For this purpose, you’ll observe, that principles in general, mean the first or chief and leading parts of any doctrine or subject, as in Bp. Wilkin’s principles of natural and revealed religion, and Sir Isaac Newton’s *principia mathematica philosophiae naturalis*, two of the most original books, I think, that have been wrote on important subjects in these latter ages, if we don’t except some of Sir Fr. Bacon’s.

C. I think these are out of our road. You may return to your subject or distinctions.

A. Principles are of two kinds, as we observed formerly on ends, viz. as they belong either to persons or to doctrines. Principles in a person are his fixt and leading sentiments or judgment. If one have none of these, or be unfixt in them, he is a man of no principle ; if they be very wrong, he is a man of bad principles ; and if they be rational and steady, he is a man of good

principles. Again, motives contain every argument, consideration, principle and end that do, or should move persons to their duty. When one is moved even to what is materially good, by wrong or improper considerations, he is said to act from bad motives, and his actions as to himself are not good : when one is pushed to bad actions by irregular motives, his actions are intirely bad : but only good actions proceeding from good and laudable motives, are truly good. Of ends, we said before, they are one kind of motives.

M. But as you are now upon the chapter of laws, are not they also principles or motives of action.

G. Yes certainly, they are both. Precept and sanction are the two essential parts of every law. The preceptive part lays down the principles. The truth, reasonableness, and authority of those being fixed in the mind, become active principles or motives. And, as to sanctions or promises and threats, either exprest or implied, they are all of the motive kind. Of these beatitudes in particular, I would say, that tho’ they are not delivered in form as laws, yet they are virtually such ; each of them containing one precept, rule, or direction ; and two arguments or motives. Thus, in the first above, the rule is, Be pure in heart : one inducement is, That it is blissful or happy in itself, or at present to be so ; another, That such shall hereafter be blest in seeing God.

But the great old commandment and the new,
Is, God to love most high, and others too.
This from the first down through all ages ran,
The plainest, greatest, happiest act of man.
This Jesus has confirm'd by word and deed :
Let no man it neglect for subtle creed.

40

Of this great master, hear two special friends,
Define God, love ; and say, He who maintains
Perpetual love, in God his dwelling hath ;
And of all duties holds the surest path.

45

Who would not love him, who is spotless love ?
Who can him love, but liker to him prove ?
And liker please him, and obey his will ;
Whereby this love will duty all fulfil,
Fulfil with pleasure, and thence happy be,
In mutual confidence and amity ?

50

C. You have omitted to consider the beatitudes, as a description of the chief good, which is a light they may be viewed in, perhaps rather than as chief laws of Christ.

A. I don't think that is so just. The Stoics indeed, placed the final good of man, or *summum bonum* in virtue alone; and they who are of that opinion, will naturally take these maxims of our Saviour for a confirmation thereof against the Epicureans, who held pleasure to be the highest good. But, this we before considered as an exceedingly complex matter; and our sentiments thereon, both for soul and body, separately and jointly, are set down on the 52, 54, and 55 pages. But if any one particular was to be taken for this chief good, the love, or which is the same thing, the enjoyment of God, is that particular. If such a genius as Cicero, methinks, had lived to be as well acquainted with the four Evangelists, as he was with the writings of Aristotle, Varro, Possidonius, and Epicurus; what a noble composition would he have made *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, instead of the dry disputes which we have in his books under that title?

M. Your commendation of love, in the first five lines above, is good: nor is the

caution in the 6th verse unnecessary. And it is proper, in illustrating the chief precept of the best religion, that you insist on the most amiable character of God as given by his beloved apostle John, 1 Epist. iii. 8. and 16. But I think you breed some obscurity by mingling him and St. Paul, Rom. xiii. 8.—10. And the definition of God as love, needs explication.

A. A little obscurity to whet attention, perhaps is not amiss, as Solomon hints in Prov. i. 6. But whoever reads the texts you have mentioned, cannot be at a loss to understand the matter tolerably. And on looking back to page 9, he may discern how emphatical the word Love is to display the whole moral character of God.

C. I see well, how strong an argument that is, to our love of God, of one another, and to every duty; as you argue in a plain enough climax or chain, in your verses ending with friendly pleasure and happiness. But, to my ear, your sound does not correspond with the sense in these questions.

G. I discern little or no dissonance. And pity it is, if love and its effects be not express'd with some harmony! other scriptures, beside the two already quoted, see in Mat. xxii. 37.—40. 1 John ii. 7, 8. and v. 3.

Ev'n towards men, much tainted and deform'd,
By love to God our hearts will soft be turn'd;
That where we cannot, ought not to delight,
We yet will pity, and them wish more right.

55

Good Jesus teaches highest, purest love
To God alone; which differently should move,
To friends, to good, to benefactors kind;
To parents, children, country, and the blind.
Where fondness and delight may not take place,
We pity owe to worst of human race.

60

Ev'n to our bitter'st foes we should wish well,
As we with rebels' Saviour hope to dwell.

65

A. The grounds and fruits of love to God and one another are thus sung; and we shall explain them more methodically, by observing, that love cannot otherwise be commanded, or enforced by authority, than to engage us in resisting contrary passions, and in viewing properly the grounds of our regard to any object. In God there are two richest grounds for our love, viz. The infinite perfection and glory of his nature, and the perpetual bounties of his providence and grace. The first fixeth our highest esteem, admiration and praise: the second demands our warmest gratitude, adoration and obedience. This last, strictly speaking, is an effect of love. Application to, delight in, and imitation of God, are other valuable fruits of our love to him. In a word, all kinds of our highest sentiments and purest affections find a most worthy object for them in God: only towards him compassion can have no place. His infinite excellencies and exuberant goodness are the firmest grounds of every superlative regard to him. But toward creatures, our love must go out much otherwise. We must esteem them with restriction, desire with caution, be grateful with limitation, imitate with order, and delight with reserve.

C. I think you play the rhetorician in these words, more than the poet in your rhimes. You have indeed, said something distinct on the grounds and effects of our

love to God; but of that to our neighbours, you have only given some general negatives that rather amuse than instruct, which seems to me the case in all flourishes, however pointed.

A. You criticise pretty nicely. But indeed, I did not design the generals you complain of, as a description of due love to our neighbours, but as a foil to our sketch of the unlimited regards we owe to the supreme Being. Yet since you seem to desire it, I shall lecture a little on the different kinds and degrees of love that we owe to mankind. Thus, esteem, delight and imitation ought to be exercised only toward the good, and that in proportion to their real goodness. Gratitude is due to all benefactors, and tends to spread beneficence among men; but the neglect of grateful returns is most odious, as tending to banish generous actions from society. Compassion or pity, which is argued for in the first four verses above, ought to comprehend all that are in distress without exception, but the more virtuous any one is, he is intitled to the tenderer sympathy. The wicked and injurious should have our good wishes for Christ's sake, as is urged in the two last verses.

M. The degrees of good will, which is strictly meant by love, are pretty justly enumerated in your four middle verses above. See Eph. v. 1, 2. 1 John iv. 21. Mat. v. 44.—46.

In Christ, of words and deeds the soul is love.
Through this, the warmest zeal doth kindly move :
But fierce religions which these laws destroy,
Are from below, not from the source of joy.

70

For outward conduct toward men, he gives
This golden rule (in tongue and heart it lives)
“ Whate’er you would that men should do to you,
“ If you were in their place, so to them do.”
Not bad revers’d ; whatever you would blame,
If others did to you, from that abstain.
These and like precepts of man’s Lord and mind,
In following books more fully you may find.

75

W. You have before mentioned love to friends, as enjoined by Christ next to our love of God : but I have heard an objection, That neither friendship, nor the love of one’s country is recommended in the New Testament.

A. That insinuation of Lord Shaftesbury is answered in one of Foster’s sermons, which shews, That all that is truly good in these affections, is plainly enough inculcated by our Saviour ; and that not only the Jews, but mankind in general, need more to have their hearts opened and enlarged, as is the tendency of the Christian precepts to do, than shut and confined, as is too often the effect of human friendships or patriotism : but that Jesus exemplified true friendship, John xix. 26, 27. And love of his country, Mat. xxiii. 37.

C. Well. But you insist so much upon love as the soul of Christianity, that I’m afraid you may be thought to vilify faith.

A. Nay, I endeavour to magnify and multiply Christian faith. I have all along been setting forth the best arguments I could for its truth, and that in the very first lines now read, where Christianity is commended, as allowing zeal indeed, but zeal so tempered with love, that fierceness and persecution may be abolished. This is intended for recommending pure Christianity both to the faith and love of mankind. Could I do it more rationally, warmly and

effectually, I would with all my heart ; and at the same time would discourage cruel bigotry, under whatever pretence it may be masked.

M. That puts me in mind of a saying of good Abp. Tillotson, who notices somewhere, that Bellarmine ranks up, I think, fifteen marks of a true church, but forgot charity or love, which is worth them all. 1 Cor. xiii. 1.—3.

G. Let me lecture a little on the golden rule, as you call it, in Mat. vii. 12. Tho’ that good Doctor, as also Blackhall, Blair and others have sermons on it. You restrict it to outward conduct or deeds to one another, owning however that it reaches to the words and thoughts, which is well express’d by its *living* there. It is no precise directory what we should do or avoid ; but its excellence and usefulness lies in calling us to change places with our neighbour in our thought, that selfish biases may be removed, and we enabled to attend impartially to the dictates of reason and justice. For this impartiality it is an excellent mean ; and is rather more plain in the negative way, which an emperor of Rome admired so much that he used it as the best motto or inscription, *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*. Finally, this chapter is concluded by referring to other books on morality, which you intend to publish if this is approved.

ALL these together lay, and then you'll have,
 The best religion that wise heart can crave.
 Let any one produce a set of laws,
 More recommending goodness void of flaws;
 More recommending all most worthy acts
 By rules consistent, and well witness'd facts:
 The muse to pledge her promise will be bold,
 To sing that new religion, not this old.

5

As temperance and exercise clear blood,
 And health to bodies give; as music good
 Refines the spirits; just sex-love the soul;
 Science the mind, bad passions to controul;
 Free state, and polish'd converse raise the man:
 All these at once Christ's laws and worship can.

10

M. You begin this last chapter on religion gravely enough, and sum up the evidences of Christianity in a sprightly manner to my fancy: but your argument in the 7th and 8th lines, seems too low.

A. I cannot see that. As poetry and poverty generally go together, such as are not supposed to have money to risque, may very properly venture what they value more, their art and their honour: but indeed, that promise was only intended to express the author's impartiality, and his confidence that no such pure, worthy, and well-attested religion, can, or ever will be produced.

C. In the six last verses, you give us a laboured and long comparison of Christianity to a number of things, and give it the preference to them all. It is not unpoetical, but needs explanation.

G. On it, you may observe seven improving things, which rise as so many steps to the eighth and ninth, viz. Gospel precepts and worship, which are asserted to be better than all the others, or to comprehend them all at once. How much the two first, temperance, and labour or exercise contribute to bodily health needs not be told: they are both enjoined by Christianity, 1 Cor. ix. 25. and iv. 12. with Rom. xii. 2. How good music also cheers and purifies the spirits both of body and mind is very clear:

and is recommended by Christianity, Mat. xxvi. 30. Eph. v. 19. Just affections, particularly between husband and wife, are likewise highly improving; and strongly enjoined Eph. v. 33. And though litigious or sophistical knowledge has no good character, 1 Cor. viii. 1. Yet modest science of God and his works, nobly enlarges the mind and subdues the passions, Prov. ii. 3.—9. 2 Pet. i. 1.—6. The sixth and seventh, true liberty and refined conversation no Briton can doubt the advantages of, for every kind of human improvement: and these also are recommended in the New Testament, 1 Cor. vii. 21. 22. Eph. iv. 29. The laws of Christ contain also more comprehensive precepts of love and doing as we would be done by, which have a most universal good influence on the whole character. And lastly, Christian worship, when performed with any degree of purity and simplicity, works most sweetly on the ears, mind, heart and life at once.

W. I see now, that these six lines are an appeal to common sense and experience, That temperance, music &c. are very improving to human nature; and then declare, that the Christian doctrines and worship include, or unite them all together.

A. That comes much to the same thing.

His truths and worship polish'd by free state,
By music, science, converse without hate,
Will charm the fiercest youth that Afric breeds,
To kill the beasts and leave men in their steads,

15

Mistake not, nor beyond all reason draw
Rhetoric figures, lit'rally to give law;
Or, by opposing dark words to the clear,
To make some pre-conceiv'd opinions bear:

20

But by just criticism, as other writes,
Explain with candour what this law indites;
And then in minds this doctrine will get place,
Where-ever honest nature suits high grace.

25

The learn'd will see; if good, th'unlearned feel,
How this religion tends to ev'ry weal.

W. Your repetition concerning the efficacy of Christ's true doctrine and worship, is lively; and in it, I suppose, you allude to a saying of Tertullian an African bishop. And it appears you are not of the famed Rousseau's opinion on the Academy of Dijon's Question.

A. No indeed. Though I know that in nations the most polished by arts and sciences, and in places most populous, luxury and villany are often most prevalent: yet these are abuses contrary to the natural tendency of science and politeness. And if M. Rousseau could be suspected of popery, he would seem a double one, making ignorance the mother of virtue, as well as of devotion.

M. As to the caveat you give, in the sixth and following lines above, for interpreting scripture, not by laying too much stress on figurative expressions, or pre-conceived notions, or giving way to biases of vice: but to explain these writings, at least with the same candid criticism as we do other ancient books; that is undoubtedly a just rule. But as to the controversy, whether reason, scripture, or the church is the true interpreter of sacred writ, nothing is said in your verses; and it surely needs to be set in a clear light by such as can.

G. That is a question much perplexed

by Bellarmine and other papists, by one Blunt in a book he calls *The Oracles of Reason*, and by Spinoza, or whoever was the author of *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*. But methinks, the clearest way of discussing it, is by considering the word of God as a set of laws. Now, it is plain, as to authoritative interpretation of laws, that no person can do it but the lawgiver; but as to applicatory interpretation, every one has a title to it, who is to judge either for practising or executing the laws. If the lawgiver had authorised any particular person or church to judge or interpret for others in religion, such a high appointment behoved to be very express: but the positive laws of God are not only silent for, but plainly against such high power in any but Christ. See Jam. iv. 11, 12. 1 Cor. i. 24. Rom. xiv. 12, 13. which shew that Christ is our only lawgiver in religion, that church-governors are only helpers; and that every one must answer, and consequently interpret or judge for himself. The church's high power being thus rejected, it remains that, under the influence of the divine Spirit, every one's reason must be his active interpreter, and that the scripture itself is the chief means, subordinate to which are the opinions of pastors and others.

For faith of saints contend with reason's might,
Whose faith is wrong, his life cannot be right.

30

As nat'ral law abused was by men,
No wonder that God's after-law of pen,
Should suffer like abuse, without reproach
Of him who both reveal'd; but offer'd both.

To creatures free t'improve, or to neglect,
And turn, as will'd, to good or bad effect.

35

That God gave one, or both, account you can,
With equal ease as that he formed man;
Who neither law perverts, till first himself
He sinks in show, in pleasure, or in pelf.

40

W. I think your references to Blounts or Spinozas, or even to their answerers, is little worth; as every one surely may spend his time more usefully and agreeably than in such reading. But your concluding verses on the last page, I really think well said and convincing. Every well-disposed heart must see or feel the happy tendency of Christianity, to promote both the private and public, present and future happiness of mankind, wherever it is rightly understood and truly practised. And this will be the case, wherever nature or reason is uprightly used and improved in Christian countries, to qualify for receiving divine revelation, this high grace. But you begin this page, with two lines opposite to Mr. Pope in his third ethic epistle, by which I think you also contradict an expression of your own on the trinity.

A. Your commendations, though out of their place, I will not controvert: but the two first verses above are taken from Jude's Epistle ver. 3. And as to Mr. Pope's verses you refer to, they may be opposite to ours in turn of words, but not in sense. He speaks of modes of faith, I of faith of saints: he of fighting, viz. with violence, I of contending with reason's might. And though the next words with him and us be literally opposite, they are not really so. Faith and practice, like soul and body here, are so united, that if one be well, the other cannot

be very ill; albeit I think faith naturally has the lead, and therefore my sentiment fully as just as that great poet's, especially as one may suppose from Ld. Bolingbroke's Letters on History, that neither the poet nor his patron had such regard to the sacred records and faith, as we endeavour to prove just. Again, as to self-contradiction, the same distinction of contentions, as just now mentioned might remove that; but a more substantial answer is, that it is not about the essential Christian doctrine or faith of the Trinity, that we forbid contention, but about human explications thereof, which are not faith but fancies.

C. The other lines last read, I see, are a plain enough answer to an objection against Christianity; because it has been greatly abused, as well as natural religion. Your answer seems much in the strain of Butler's Analogy; and lands the blame on man's abuse of his free-will. You carry it abundantly far: and yet I cannot see, but the objection is as strong against man's being a creature of God, because he has abused himself; as it is against reason or Christianity being laws of God, because they are abused by man.

G. I observe also, in the last two lines, an important instruction, that vanity, sensual pleasure, and avarice are the great causes of infidelity.

Why was not the whole volume shortly wrote,
 In maxims moral, and divine : but not
 So lengthen'd out, by tedious lists of names,
 And long historic facts of diff'rent fames ?
 Might not the practic part, which is the whole,
 Better been said, like Life of God in Soul ;
 Or more extensive, and as void of strife,
 Oeconomy been form'd of Human Life ?
 Pray, first observe, may not one ask as soon,
 Why time is not all day, or cloudless noon ?
 Why are there mountains wild, or empty seas ?
 Why does not every inch produce and please ?
 The Maker, in both kinds alike, affords
 Signs of high wisdom, in his works and words.

A. In these verses another sort of objection is answered, taken from the seeming uselessness of such long histories and genealogies, as fill up a great part of the Bible; that, as practice is the chief design of the whole, it might have answered that purpose better, if the scripture had been short and quite practical, like the two books referred to. The answers above, are expressed like the objections interrogatively, which I think is sufficiently plain, and not inelegant.

W. Beside the interrogative answers which you give, I think a large part of scripture being history, is wisely and well adapted to human nature; as no kind of reading so strongly engages our attention to Providence and characters, that we may venerate the first, and imitate the good and shun the bad of the latter. For which reason one takes much more pleasure, and I think may reap more advantage, in reading the Greek and Roman history, or even Telemaque and Richardson's Works, than in poring on your systems, or even some bodies of morals and divinity. But you have not touched some other objections against scripture, drawn from various readings, apparent contradictions, obscurity and the like.

G. As these objections are fully answered in Philocheutherus Lipsianus, Leland,

Brown and other learned answers to Tindal; and before these, in the works of Lightfoot, Spanheim and Stillingfleet, it would be much too tedious to enter into these subjects here. I shall only say, that if any one can produce but half the bulk of writings, done by half the number of authors, of half the antiquity and distance of time from one another, who have half as little of these difficulties; I shall half doubt the divine excellence of the Bible.

C. But, may not Mohamedanism by a favourable interpretation, be reconciled to natural religion and reckoned an improvement on Christianity, as this was on Judaism, and Judaism on Pagan religion?

A. I know two gentlemen, Messrs Lord and Sale, have made attempts that way. But beside internal absurdities, which I am not master enough of that language to be certain if they can at all be removed or overcome; propagation by the sword, and want of external seals by prophecies or miracles, are such impediments to rational belief, that the Mohamedan religion can, by no means, be justly received as authorised of heaven. It is most evident, that though a book be consistent and of good morals, if it have not also supernatural confirmation, it cannot claim equal authority with such as have both.

First, morning dawn breaks on the patriarchs old ;
The same through Moses rises red and bold,
With clouds which vanish as day makes advance ;
And kings with prophets in that twilight dance.

55

At length the glorious sun in Jesus rose,
And shed pure light around on friends and foes,
But ere mid-day came mists and show'rs of hail,
And long eclipse that threaten'd day should fail ;
'Till in the north there gradually appears,
Clear sky of light and liberty, which cheers
Some nations northward ; chief the British isles,
Where knowledge and free enquiry still smiles.
Ah ! may the practice answer to the light !
Then might we promise that 'tis long to night.

60

65

C. In illustrating the harmony betwixt the word and works of God, I see you run into a description which is pretty poetical ; but as I imagine is not so proper, as it relates to the different periods of the church, rather than to the different parts of holy scripture. The duration of the world is compared to a long day, and revealed religion to various degrees of light through that day. It begins to dawn in the time of the patriarchs. Under Moses it comes to a strong red light, but darting through clouds which fly away as the sun approaches. Then the sun rises when Jesus appears. All this, 'tis plain, may be applied to different parts of scripture, Old and New : but what follows after the first six of these verses, I neither see its propriety nor meaning so well, particularly what is to be understood by mid-day.

A. For understanding all these, you'll observe that, as in the first six of these lines, the conformity in the progress of revelation to the work of God in light, is described ; so in the other eight, the different degrees of the success of the gospel is delineated. This belongs to church-history. And they who would understand it distinctly, must consult Tursellinus, Hornius, Spanhemius,

Fleury, or Dupin in their introductions to ecclesiastic history ; or the large works of Usher, Baronius, and the Centuriatores Magdeburgenses, or Petrie and Bower. Again, as to mid-day, it plainly cannot be meant of the mid-time of the world, else it will stand much longer than is commonly expected : but it must denote the most splendid time for true religion, in its liberty and practice. Whether that was in the age of Constantine the Great, or is it yet to come, we need not be positive. I hope it is to come, as these verses insinuate. By mists are signified the errors, or heresies that sprung up in the primitive church. By showers of hail, the ten persecutions of Christians in those ages. By the eclipse is meant, the dark times of popery, when the light of Christianity was almost banished from the earth. By the clear sky or light in the north, is meant the reformation, which began in the north-east of Germany, and spread over to the south and west of France ; but, together with civil liberty, got its chief seat in our Britain, where (blessed be to its author !) it still continues.

W. I discern the propriety of your prayer or wish in the two last good lines.

But, for wild mountains, or wide barren seas,
On earth or scriptures, let this reason please.

70

God's grandeur more appears in seas and hills;
His truth's confirm'd through geneologic rills.

As light and shade more please and fix the eye;

So facts with precepts more attract, and tie

The mind to listen, and believe the whole,

75

As more like his, who body made and soul.

The facts, like limbs, possess the largest place;

The active soul pervades, but fills no space.

Man made for action is, these wastes supply

Room for exertion, and his pow'rs to try.

80

In grace as nature, all would idle be;

If all was garden wrought, or loaded tree.

If scripture all was clear and moral chain,

This muse, and many sermons, would be vain.

Hear, search, believe; (religion's sum is this)

85

Love God, be humble, and seek endless bliss.

M. Very well! You represent I do think prettily, the advantages of some sort of wastes or shades, both on the terraqueous globe and in sacred scripture: that they serve to engage attention, promote belief, and give employment to the improving activity of mankind. And yet I cannot say but such arguments may be more specious than solid. The wastes in nature or the earth, seem plainly a kind of punishment for the vices of men, and consequences of the deluge as Dr. T. Burnet shews: but, why the like wastes in a revelation of mercy, designed purely to remove vice?

A. Whether Burnet's Theory of the origin of mountains and seas be solid or not, which there is no room here to discuss, it is certain that the present state of the earth both as to land and sea, may justly be considered as partly punitive, but more part merciful; I should rather say chastising than punitive: because it is all adapted, though by labour and hardships, to correct and improve the children of men. The revelations of religion are indeed given on a more purely gracious and improving design than

nature; but yet so as to require diligence, and pains in us to understand and improve by them. They are somewhat like a mine of precious medicines, which must be dug, laboratoried, and refined for use; or corns, which need to be cultivated, prepared, and chewed for our digestion and nourishment. If the author of nature, should in our present state, shower ready prepared food and physic from heaven among us in abundance, the beautiful variety of arts, employments, and connections in society would cease, and mankind immediately become either a multitude of angels, or a heap of drones. About equally inconvenient would a Bible or divine revelation be, in the form of Lombard's Sentences, Calvin's Institutes, or the most regular, short and plain moral system that we have seen, or can conceive. Then might we expect idle and endless scholastic disputes; or else no variety of learning, no poets nor pastors at all.

W. Your words now spoken are higher than your verses, and both I apprehend on the strong side. However, I am satisfied that a spontaneous earth, and more easy and

short system of revelation, behoved to produce a different and less variegated order of society, whether for better or worse I can't say. Probability at least, lies on your side. But, as to your sum of religion in the last two verses, it appears to me somewhat dark and defective, particularly as making no mention of repentance, which is an essential part of religion in degenerate creatures.

G. It is so. And yet I don't see necessity for using the word *repentance* here. One might doubtless begin these two lines, *Repent, believe*: but that would exclude two others, *hear and search*, which have a more agreeable connection with, and retrospect to, the preceding verses and subject. Read the last page over again and you will see this. But, it was further considered, that repentance is too much among many people, restricted almost wholly to sorrow for sin; therefore, had there been room for it, I should have put in the word *reform* after *believe*. But the best answer to your objection as I take it, is, that the words as they stand, express the chief parts of repentance truly and not improperly. To hear and search, (according to Rom. x. 17. and 2 Cor. xiii. 5. with John v. 39.) are necessary means on our part, both to faith and repentance. Then, if one *be humble*, which is enjoined in our last verse, he will see and confess his sins, with grief and sorrow for them, which are other preparatory branches of this duty. And lastly, when we love God and seek endless bliss, we are truly reformed, which is the essence of repentance.

W. Enough for that word and matter: but still I perceive some obscurity through the parenthesis in your last verse but one. and the question is, whether the sum of religion refers to what went before that parenthesis, or what follows it, or both?

A. I answer, both; but in different degrees or kinds. We have on page 65, taken notice of two things, viz. means and ends

in religion; and these as relating both to doctrines or institutions, and to persons. What goes before the parenthesis, points out the chief means on our part, namely, attention, consideration and faith. These with prayer, (which is really omitted here, as having been fully illustrated in chap. x.) are three most substantial means. And the three duties in the last verse, are the very soul or substance of religion itself.

M. I think we now understand the matter more clearly, and I can give a little explanation of these three. The first is love to God, the nature and grounds of which were considered on page 69; and his nature being love or goodness itself, love to him must comprehend suitable regards to all the good you can know or express. The second is humility, which, though it cannot have place in God, as compassion cannot be exercised towards him; yet in weak or offending creatures, it is deeply necessary and proper. Whether it be a mean or end, it is essential to Christianity. The last is, to seek eternal bliss; which must be understood of keeping that in our eye, and pursuing it through holiness, virtue and goodness as both the principal ingredients in, and road to that bliss.

G. Allow me to observe further, that as these six are the substantial means and ends of Christians; so they are the distinguishing marks of a true or false Christian. As every one hears, considers, and believes this institution, so will his improvement by it be: and according to his piety, humility, and regards to an endless state, so will the man be here and hereafter. Vicious or worldly persons may seek heaven through barren faith, or partial righteousness: but the good Christian considers eternal happiness as eternal goodness. He keeps that in his view; and pursues it in the steps of his holy Saviour.

T H E

C O N T E N T S.

Chap.	ver.	page
I.	48. OF God and nature.	1
II.	90. Natural religion its precepts.	5
III.	58. Natural religion its defects.	12
IV.	90. Divine laws enforced through miracles.	17
V.	58. The law confirmed by sure records and prophecies.	23
VI.	30. Gospel introduced by prophecies.	27
VII.	44. Gospel confirmed by miracles.	29
VIII.	28. The purposes of miracles.	32
IX.	28. Ends of Christ's sufferings.	34
X.	44. Christian rites and prayer.	36
XI.	60. Christian orders and sacraments.	40
XII.	36. Christianity founded on argument.	45
XIII.	62. A future state.	48
XIV.	36. Resurrection of bodies.	53
XV.	38. Final judgment.	56
XVI.	50. Christ's example.	59
XVII.	44. Spirit of grace.	62
XVIII.	78. Chief laws of Christ.	65
XIX.	86. Excellence and truth of Christianity.	71

CONTENTS

Page	Chapter	Ver.
1	OF GOD AND NATURE.	I.
2	Natural religion its properties.	II.
3	Natural religion its defects.	III.
4	Divine laws enforced through miracles.	IV.
5	The law confirmed by true records and prophecies.	V.
6	Gospel introduced by prophecies.	VI.
7	Gospel confirmed by miracles.	VII.
8	The prophecies of the gospel.	VIII.
9	Rank of Christ's Kingdom.	IX.
10	OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.	X.
11	OF CHRISTIAN ORDERS AND SACRAMENTS.	XI.
12	Christianity founded on revelation.	XII.
13	A future state.	XIII.
14	Revelation of policy.	XIV.
15	Final judgment.	XV.
16	OF THE FUTURE STATE.	XVI.
17	OF THE FUTURE STATE.	XVII.
18	OF THE FUTURE STATE.	XVIII.
19	OF THE FUTURE STATE.	XIX.
20	OF THE FUTURE STATE.	XX.

